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# WAR AND IMMORTALITY



H.W. MORROW, M.A.



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WAR AND IMMORTALITY



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# WAR AND IMMORTALITY

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

BY

H. W. MORROW, M.A.

TRINITY CHURCH, OMAGH

AUTHOR OF "QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED BY OUR LORD"

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To  
THE MEMBERS OF  
TRINITY CHURCH, OMAGH



## PREFACE

At a time like the present, when our nation is engaged in the most terrible war that the world has ever seen, and when so many homes are darkened by the shadow of death and sorrow, it seems to me that anyone who does something towards brightening the lives of these shadowed homes, is rendering a service, however humble, to the whole community.

The addresses contained in this volume, which were delivered in the ordinary course of the author's ministry, are an attempt to reveal something of the silver lining of the dark cloud which casts such a deep shadow over so many hearts.

The writer of these addresses gratefully acknowledges the help he received from books and other literature more or less bearing on the subjects dealt with in this volume.

1916.



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# I

## Help from the Hills\*

“ I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”—PSALM CXXI. I.

THE circumstances under which we meet at this time are very special. Through the last fateful days events have been hurrying on, and now “ war’s avenging rod has lashed all Europe into blood.” I know that to-day our minds are occupied with one subject, almost to the exclusion of everything else. I know that on this quiet summer Sunday morning, our hearts are with the soldiers and sailors of our people who so willingly have offered themselves for the safety of our beloved land. And in view of all this where could I so fittingly find a theme whereon to address you as in the book of Psalms—this wonderful treasure house wherein are found words of help, of strength, of comfort, of peace ?

Who wrote this 121st Psalm we know not, nor does it greatly matter. From out of the dimness there seems to emerge a mysterious unknown figure. He is unknown, I say, yet we clasp hands with him across the age-long gulf of years, because, like us, he was struggling, like us he stood in need of comfort, of help, of strength, and our hearts go out to him as we hear him cry : “ I will lift up

\*Delivered at the beginning of the war.

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mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

If, as many think, this psalm is one of the pilgrim psalms, intended to be sung by the pious Israelites as they wended their way to the Temple in the Holy City to keep the sacred feasts, then how appropriate are the words. How welcome after long days of dreary dangerous marching must have been the sight of those encircling hills, that lie so lovingly round Jerusalem! How gladly were eager eyes uplifted to those hills that spoke to tired pilgrim hearts of a long journey well-nigh over; that held in their serene heights a promise of rest, of safety, of refreshment! Well, truly, might the traveller towards Jerusalem exclaim: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

### I. THE PERENNIAL FRESHNESS OF THE BIBLE

It is the outstanding marvel of the Bible that never do its words grow time-worn or out of date. The great temple has vanished from sight; the holy city Jerusalem is no longer a praise in the earth; the everlasting hills that still surround it no longer look down upon streams of pious pilgrims, thronging joyfully to keep the God-appointed feasts; yet, while so much of the material setting of the words of our text has changed or passed away, the eternal spiritual truth that the words convey is unchanged and unchangeable. Still you and I are pilgrims—pilgrims, not to an earthly Jerusalem but a heavenly, pilgrims not to a feast that must soon be over but to a happy place, where

We shall sit at endless feast,  
Enjoying each the others' good.

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Still on our journey, we, if we are wise men, look up to the hills from whence our help cometh.

When I say that times of doubt, of anxiety, of trouble come to us, everyone, that there is no heart that does not know its own bitterness, that there are no eyes so bright that never have they been tear-dimmed—when I say this, I state a truth so obvious that I am in danger of being taxed with talking mere platitudes. But let us get a step further: let us ask ourselves where, when the trouble is actually upon us, do we go to seek for help? The conditions of life are such and our natures are so formed, that for any man to stand alone in a strong, though it may be selfish isolation, is scarce possible. Where, then, in our sorrows, do you and I seek for help? A great preacher has said (I am not quoting his exact words): “There are those who seem to think that the escape from trouble is everything, that the door through which we fly matters not. This is not so. Tell me where in his sorrow a man looks for relief, and I will tell you with almost absolute certainty what manner of man he is. I am persuaded that the door through which we escape from trouble is often of more importance than the escape itself. I can well conceive of troubles from which it were better not to escape than to escape wrongly. I can imagine difficulties wherewith it were nobler for a man to struggle single-handed and to fail than to win so-called victories through unworthy means. When we say that trouble tests men, and shows us of what stuff they are made, I truly believe that the test often comes just through the quality of the help that they call to their aid.”



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And here in our text, we have a man speaking to us out of the youth of the world—a man who is a pattern to everyone who is in trouble, a man who is so great that he can accept help from none but the greatest. In his difficulties this man looks not down but up; therefore is he a pattern to you and me—a pattern at all times, but more especially to-day.

### II. WAR CRUEL BUT OFTEN NECESSARY

I return now to the all-absorbing subject, the subject of the war. It is a theme whereon I speak with difficulty. Where there is great emotion, our words must necessarily be few and inadequate. That war is a grim and ghastly thing we cannot deny. How true are the words of the prophet: "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." Yes, but there are times when the only way to maintain peace is to go to war; and I will say that this war was not undertaken lightly. Every possible means, I believe, was tried to prevent strife. We have not been the aggressors: all our counsels made not for war but for peace. These negotiations failed, and now if England deserted her allies, if she permitted a neutral country to be over-run without lifting a finger to help, then she would be false to her old and glorious traditions, then she would be in danger of falling under the doom of the do-nothings; she would be in danger of bringing upon herself the curse pronounced so long ago against the inhabitants of Meroz, who came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Into the causes that led to this war I need not now enter. You have read these things for

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yourselves in the public papers. Suffice it now to say that we are persuaded that in this time of world-wide crisis, our country is acting a brave, an honourable, a Christian part, and that we may look to the result with confidence and hope, believing as we do that God is on our side, that the long, slow history of the centuries is the story of the triumph not of the wrong, but of the right. Brethren, we have a glorious national history behind us. I know our failings, I grieve over our black national sins; yet, I say—and I challenge anyone to contradict me—our traditions, the overwhelming trend of our national life has been on the side of honour, of justice, of liberty, of that universal brotherhood which as Christians we must all wish to attain.

“There is not a spot of earth to-day whereon England’s foot has been placed that would not be unspeakably worse if that foot were taken away. Not one step has England taken around the world, that has not meant the uplift of humanity, finer and higher religion, education, industrial advance, opportunity for liberty just as soon as the people were fit for it—unspeakable blessings to the people involved.” I say this, and I go further. You know the old saying: “Noblesse oblige.” If you are nobly born, then the obligation lies upon you to act nobly.

Now, our forefathers were some of the greatest men the world has ever seen. The patents of their nobility were sealed, not on earth, but in heaven; and we, their sons, are going to prove ourselves worthy of our grand parentage. I have heard it said that we are living in a decadent age, that Englishmen have lost somewhat of the old bravery, the old rush, the old determination;

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that no longer could it be said of us that we did not know when we were defeated. I never believed this. How could I in the face of the record borne by an eye-witness to the conduct of the Inniskillings in the recent South African War. "They rushed on," he says, "but were met by such a murderous fire that the whole front line fell to a man. Nothing daunted, on swept the gallant regiment, the men falling at every yard, till at the roll-call afterwards but one officer and forty men responded out of nearly six hundred." I ask you, was ever a record such as this surpassed even in what we are wont to call "the brave days of old"? The response that young England is making to her country's call to-day, the wave of loyalty and devotion that is surging over the land—these things give the lie to those pessimists who told us that England had seen her best days.

### III. THE SPIRIT OF TRUE WARFARE

Once more, I say, this war was not undertaken lightly. In the olden time our soldiers went in to the battle with a prayer, a hymn, a psalm; then verily they "waxed valiant in fight and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." These grand old psalms are for ever consecrated to us because they were sung by Cromwell's watchfires, while his Ironsides charged to their music. Our hearts will be cold in death ere we forget how our forefathers sang them when they were hunted to prison and to death. Does it not become us, their children, living as we are in the midst of uncertainties and the alarms of war, to lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help; to be much in prayer to the God of battles in whose mighty hand are the issues of life and

## Help from the Hills

death? "We are not to go rashly into war that good may come out of it. We have not in this case done so. But great present calamities are often great gains in the end. The awful fire in London was in the end an infinite blessing. There was sorrow, there was pain, there was loss of property, loss of life, yet much of the city's filth, sickness and crowding were destroyed, and men saw that God was scourging them for their good. We know that sometimes a storm is a blessing, cleansing and purifying the air from pestilent vapours, and when it is over, we forget the rain and rejoice in the purity, the freshness, the clear shining after rain." So let us remember that war, awful as it is, and dire as are the calamities that it leaves in its train, even war has its uses, its place in God's ordered plan for humanity, which is ever tending towards peace and order and perfection.

Is it nothing that the love and loyalty of the entire nation, whereof I have already spoken, has been all called out, that our hearts are on fire not with the mad desire for victory at all cost, but with a high and noble patriotism? Is it nothing to see that the courage of our nation is unchanged? Might not even a member of the Peace Society rejoice to know that we can fight as well as ever our fathers did? I say that war often calls out much that is best and noblest in humanity. Have we not read of men, wounded themselves, giving their last drop of water to a comrade whose need was greater than theirs?

Do we not know the tenderness wherewith our wounded enemies are now treated—yes, and what of that noble band of women, who, like Florence Nightingale, are willing to go to the grim field of

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battle, to risk their lives, to help, to tend and to comfort our stricken soldiers ?

But away and beyond all its uses, this war is surely a trumpet call to prayer. We, the non-combatants, can do our share towards gaining the victory in the highest sense, the victory of the true and the right. I have read that the natives of India said of Sir Henry Lawrence, that, when he was in a difficulty, he looked up to heaven ; then he always seemed to know what to do.

We stand now at a crisis in our nation's fate. Let us look up : let us lift our eyes unto the hills whence cometh our help. Once we are firmly persuaded that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose ; then we can await the turn of events, then we can read the war telegrams with a calm brave heart. So let us pray most earnestly for our soldiers and our sailors, that God may be very near them, that He may protect them, and be a wall of fire round them ; that whether they live or die, with them it may be well.

But let us not forget the sad hearts at home. Let us most tenderly remember those who have given sons, husbands, brothers to fight our country's battles. Let us pray God to comfort them. Let us entreat that they, too, may be led to look up to the hills whence cometh their help. May this war teach us all where our true trust is : may it show us that the fear of God in the hearts and homes of a people is the greatest power in a nation. And may this great struggle make in the end for peace, and harmony and good fellowship among the nations. May it tend to hasten the time when men shall " beat their

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swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

To-day, let us learn from our text that it is your privilege and mine as children of God to seek and obtain help from the highest. For comfort, for strength, for guidance, let us look up to God. He is our Father : He loves us : He will undertake for us : He will watch between us and our dear ones ; and they are well kept whom God keeps. " I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

" The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."

## II

### Temporary Separation ; Permanent Union

“ For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever.”

PHILEMON 15 (R.V.):

I WONDER how many of you have ever been called upon to attempt the task of reconciling two men who are at variance ? What discretion is needed, what delicacy ! How easy, by a word too much or a word too little, to undo any good that may have been done. How warily the would-be peace-maker needs to walk to avoid the shoals and pitfalls that lie all around this dangerous subject. With the best motives in the world a rash or unwise intercessor may only make bad worse and render the quarrel irreparable.

Those, I say, who have ever tried to plead for the offender with one who considers himself wronged, will sympathise with St. Paul's difficulties when he penned this epistle.

The circumstances were briefly these. Philemon, to whom this letter was addressed, had a slave called Onesimus, who in his youth seems to have been worthless enough. Even St. Paul himself admits that he was “ unprofitable.” He was a runaway, probably also a thief. Then he came under the influence of St. Paul, and all was changed. The story of the Gospel, what



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we call "the old, old, story," but which was then so new—the story of the Gospel won its way. In the heart of Onesimus was wrought that wonderful change which we call Conversion. This "unprofitable" slave was one of the many upon whose life the influence of Christ worked a miracle of grace. And writing to Philemon, to a justly incensed and angry master, St. Paul pleads for his dearly-loved spiritual son, with a grace and delicacy unsurpassed in literature. He, the friend of both parties, steers clear of all difficulties, and performs his arduous task to admiration. Philemon, we feel sure, must have been mollified; his just anger must have been appeased as he read a letter so sensible, so dignified, yet withal so deferential and so friendly. It is from the very heart of this pleading pathetic letter that our text is taken: "For perhaps," says St. Paul, writing of this same Onesimus, "for perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldst have him for ever."

I would have you notice, first, the note of uncertainty in the Apostle's mind.

### I. THE NOTE OF UNCERTAINTY IN THE APOSTLE'S MIND

"Perhaps," he writes. It is as though he wrote: "It may have been so and so, but I do not know, I cannot dogmatise." How strange that even an Apostle, whose pen was guided by the Spirit, should yet have been uncertain! How strange, yet in a sense how comforting! How near this one little word brings you and me to this great, strong Paul, whom we were wont to

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think of as removed from us as far as the stars ! He, too, like you and me, is uncertain. He, too, is forced to confess he does not know. Perhaps, perhaps. Ah me, how often we have used that word ! What a vision does it call up before us of doubts, of perplexities, of the thousand and one things upon which we can merely speculate !

After all there are real and rich gains in uncertainty. It is well our heavenly Father's plans are not all as clear to us as noon-day. It is wisely ordered that the mists hang over them. It makes for our highest good that life is so ordered that not the strongest among us dares to boast that he is sure of seeing to-morrow's sun.

This uncertainty keeps us humble. We hang from hour to hour on God. After we have done our utmost, the issue must always remain with Him. We can only humbly say, "Perhaps I have acted rightly." And when the "perhaps" turns out against us, ah, then, what can we do save turn in humility to Him in whom we live and move, and have our being, and from the depths of our defeat, our disaster, our despair, hear Him say to our souls : "What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Will you be surprised if I say to you that I believe the uncertainties of life are intended to teach us a lesson of patience and hope ? However heavy our sorrows may be, it is wonderful how suddenly and how unexpectedly they can roll away like the morning mists before the sun. So it is ours to do our best and wait patiently. The issue is after all not with us but with God ; and with Him is no uncertainty, no perhaps.

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We have seen by the seaside a pool lying high up among the rocks. The pools lower down catch the incoming tide first, and are laughing and leaping in the sun ; but the far-off pool waits and hopes, and at last its patience and hope are rewarded. At length the last rock-ridge is overwashed, and it too is flooded with the great sea in its fulness. Thus is it with those who amid life's uncertainties patiently, hopefully wait upon God. To them too comes the glorious golden moment when their souls are flooded with the fulness of God's love.

This brings me to my second thought. Amid life's uncertainties, it is God's providence that shapes our ends.

### II. GOD'S PROVIDENCE SHAPES OUR ENDS

I would have you here note specially the revised version of our text, which reads : " Perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever."

You see the Apostle here does not say " he departed," but " he was parted from thee." Now, as I have said already, we have the facts of the case. Onesimus ran away. There is no getting over that. He absconded from his master, his home, his duty ; it may be taking with him more than was justly his. Yet behind this slave's unprofitableness, behind his sin, St. Paul seems, does he not, even here, to recognise an over-ruling Providence ?

" Perhaps he was parted from thee." What a vista of thought does this open up ! While you, sinner, are sinning, God, though He hates your

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sin, loves you. He takes even your sin into the great all-embracing scope of His providence, and makes it, when at last you turn to Him, work out your own eternal gain. "Onesimus went away foolishly, wickedly: that is the human side of the picture. Onesimus was parted from Philemon by the doing of the Lord: that is the Divine side."

Life is full of partings. Just now, when the youths of our land are so nobly enrolling themselves for the defence of our country, the very air is full of the word, "Good-bye." Behind all these partings, let us see God. His providence, the providence that took note of the unprofitable, runaway slave, watches over these brave lads while they are parted from their dear ones, watches over them, and in life or in death, will verily keep them from all evil.

Do I by chance speak to any who are mourning over past sins, sins they would give the world to be able to undo? Take courage. Live close to God now, and He, by a wonderful Divine alchemy, may transmute even your black sins to gold. Onesimus ran away, committed doubtless other sins that all his remaining years he remembered with grief; yet the Lord did not forsake him, but led him on safely, led him to his great teacher Paul, led him up to his glory as a Christian and a saint of God.

Sinner, it is only your sin that God hates. He loves you far more tenderly than St. Paul loved Onesimus. His providence is ever busy with men, shaping their ends, "rough-hew them how they will."

In the third place, I say: "Behind a frowning providence, God hides a smiling face."

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### III. GOD'S SMILING FACE BEHIND A FROWNING PROVIDENCE

"Perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever."

Onesimus ran away. Yes, but he was coming back, never to be parted from Philemon again—coming back, not as a slave, but as a brother beloved in Jesus Christ. Learn this lesson to-night; God's clouds have a silver lining. Those blessings you think you have lost, it may be, what know we? it may be they are only taken from you for a time that they may be restored fourfold, restored never to be taken from you more.

For years, we in this land have enjoyed the blessing of peace. Now we are at war. This is a grievous national calamity, and we mourn over the partings, the sorrows, the loss of life that war entails; yet, let us take courage. Let us still hope. Perhaps peace has been taken from us for a season, that we may have it again for ever. Should our arms be finally crowned with success, as we pray and believe they will, then undoubtedly our Government will insist on terms of peace that will make such a war as we are now engaged in impossible for the future. Perhaps in God's good providence, perhaps this war, dark and disastrous though it is, has been tolerated that afterwards the glorious time may come in, the time foretold by the prophet, when,

No longer host encountering host  
Shall crowds of slain deplore.  
They hang the trumpet on the wall  
And study war no more.

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And when death takes from us those we so dearly loved, ah, then, what comfort may we gather from our text, realising as we do that they are parted from us for a season that we may have them for ever in that bright and better world, where partings are unknown.

I have spoken of the uncertainties of life. When the believer comes to die, then all uncertainties are at an end. "I go," said the brilliant Frenchman, "I go to look for a great perhaps." When the Christian dies, he goes not to look for any "perhaps," but for the realisation of "a hope both sure and steadfast." He goes to be with Christ, which is far better. He goes to rejoin those dear ones from whom he was parted for a season, that he might have them again for ever.

O blessèd hope ! with this elate  
Let not our hearts be desolate,  
But strong in hope and patience wait  
Until He come—until He come.

### III

## War and Immortality

“ For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”—JOB XIX. 25 and 26.

WE considered recently the part that uncertainty plays in life, and how even an inspired Apostle could not dogmatise, but was obliged to use the word, “ perhaps.” We are now to strike a different note ; we are to speak of life’s great certainties ; we are to see how one writing away back centuries ago, when the world was young, was able to say not “ perhaps,” but with a glad triumphant tone of assurance, “ I know.”

And the man who to-day is to speak to us was no easy philosopher, no sentimentalist, saying pretty, picturesque things, because they sound attractive. No. This man was one “ on whom God’s tempests fell all night ” ; who saw wealth, friends, comforts, bodily health wrenched from him ; who was tried by every conceivable form of affliction, but who in the midst of desolation and disaster, held fast his faith in God ; whose soul was safely and forever anchored to the Rock of Ages ; who felt that he had the Eternal for his refuge, and that underneath were the everlasting arms. When such a man says, “ I know,” then we feel that we may listen to him with confidence, because the words are written as it were with his own heart’s blood. He is not uttering easy platitudes from the serene heights of comfort.



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The truths he teaches have been learned in the furnace of affliction. His words flow warm and living from his anguished human soul.

In these wonderful verses, it is experience that speaks. The man, Job, had had his day of prosperity. Wealth, friends, children, health, success—all these were his in no stinted measure ; then came the sudden and the unexpected change. Stroke after stroke, afflictions fell upon him.

One woe did tread upon another's heels,  
So fast they followed.

His sorrows came "not single spies, but in battalions" ; and our hearts are thrilled as we hear this man crying in the midst of the storm and tempest : "For I know that my Redeemer liveth."

I will ask you to consider first, what these words meant to the patriarch Job.

### I. WHAT THESE WORDS MEANT TO JOB

In this old, old book, this book of Job, we have some of the most sublime utterances ever penned by man. The verse before us is a case in point. Never did human faith and love and hope soar higher than in this passage. When a man has become persuaded that he has a Redeemer, living and interested in his case, and that, though worms destroy his body, yet one day in that flesh, now so tormented and pain-racked, he will see God ; when a man is persuaded of this then he has reached an anchorage from which the storms of life are powerless to drift him. Yet we must be careful not to read into the words more than they are really intended to convey. Job, let us remember, was not a New Testament Christian, but an Arabian chief—upright, honourable,

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beloved of God, yet with his old world limitations upon him. We have set ourselves here the task of trying to understand what Job really meant when he used these words ; we are to try to put ourselves in his place, and to think his thoughts after him.

The Hebrew word he uses for Redeemer is "Gōēl," and we have a fairly adequate idea of what this word stood for. "In all the early stages of society the redress of wrongs is not a public, but a private act." In Job's day, our modern courts of justice, our system of trial by jury, were of course unknown. But the functions of judge and jury, the powers of arbitration, in complicated cases were centred in one man—usually the eldest born of the family—who was called the Gōēl, the champion of his people, the avenger of blood. So that Job here states his conviction that there is such a Vindicator for him, one who will yet do battle on his behalf, will champion his cause, will make his righteousness to shine forth as the light. "I know," he cries, "that my Redeemer"—my Vindicator—"liveth."

We have come here, it seems to me, to a distinct and well-marked crisis in the soul history of Job. He has turned away definitely and for ever from man, and set his face resolutely towards God. He has found what a gulf exists between him and his friends. They have proved themselves "miserable comforters," and he will have none of them. Their well-meant but ill-timed platitudes have fallen like molten lead on a raw sore. He appeals not to them, for they have failed him, but to God.

Look at the chapter from which our text is taken. At the sixth verse we find his new, his unassailable position : "Know now that God

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hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with His net." Job has pronounced the right word at last, and that word is God. It is God who has wounded him; it is God who has fenced up his way so that he cannot pass; it is the hand of God that has touched him. He realises this, knows it, not with a superficial careless head knowledge, but has won the certainty in the hard school of experience; then with a rush of sublime, perhaps prophetic inspiration, he cries: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Do not the music and majesty and magnificence of the words thrill our souls? No need to push them too far: no need to read into them what never was there. Take them as they stand, and they are pulsing with life.

Here is a man tried as perhaps never man was tried before. Lover and friend have been put far from him; human sympathy has failed him; his would-be comforters have only succeeded in adding bitterness to his cup. In his extremity he looks up. He takes God to be his Vindicator, his Avenger. We feel that the worst of the man's sorrow is now over. We feel that soon the clouds will break, and the sunshine burst forth again. In the midst of his dust and ashes his faith is strong. He knows God, and knowing God he knows all things. To-day he believes; to-morrow he will see.

It would be unwise to say that Job when he gave utterance to our text knew all that we know about Christ, the resurrection, and the life beyond the grave. Yet it would be more unwise still to

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declare that he had no vision of the coming glory. For us it is enough to take his glorious words as they stand, and to believe that they are the utterance of a faithful, tried soul, who from the very heart of his fiery trial wrung out the certainty that he had a Vindicator who would plead his cause, be his Advocate and not another's.

Had Job never been reinstated in more than his former prosperity ; had God's tempests continued to fall upon him till the end ; had he died at last a broken, bankrupt, and bereaved man ; yet with him all would have been well. Had the Lord not vindicated His servant in time, He would most certainly have done so in eternity. So soon our little span of years passes away, but God has the endless ages wherein to work. Away back in the grey dawn of time, this man cried out to his Vindicator, and the Lord heard his cry, vindicated him on earth, and through the long heavenly eternities is vindicating His servant still.

We pass on to notice, secondly, what these words of Job mean to us in the light of the New Testament.

### II. WHAT THESE WORDS MEAN IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“ For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

One of the most noble strains of earthly music has been wedded to these words, and the song goes on ever growing in clearness and glory and triumph : “ For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.” Thus does the musician with celestial inspiration bridge the gulf

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of years with heavenly harmony, and carry us into the New Testament, for ever linking the sublime utterance of the old patriarch with the noble words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

When we to-day read the words of our text, we think of a Cross, an empty grave, a Redeemer risen, glorified, exalted; One who was dead and is alive for evermore, One who has the keys of death and of hell. You and I to-day rejoice in a Redeemer who is to be our Vindicator.

Our soldiers are at war, and we feel that ours is the cause of righteousness. Not to extend our own conquests, not through any pride or vain-glory are we fighting to-day, but in defence of the weak, that our brave allies should not be outnumbered and oppressed by the armies of a false and arrogant tyrant. Let us strain every nerve to help in this great contest, this crusade, this holy war; but when victory crowns our arms, then let us remember that the Lord is our Vindicator, our Avenger, that vengeance is His, and that He will repay.

I have often thought how poor and inadequate man's revenge is after all. Could any injury hereafter to be inflicted on Germany bring one of those slaughtered Belgian women or children back to life again, or dry the tears of the widows and orphans who are sorrowing in our land to-day? Let us say with Job: "I know that my Vindicator liveth"—mine and theirs, and let us leave vengeance, revenge, in His hand to whom of right it belongs.

We need as a nation at this time to keep specially close to, and to strive to live by the teachings of this Bible of ours, this Book wherein lies the secret of England's greatness.

In a certain part of England the ladies, amongst

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other comforts they are sending out to our soldiers are fitting up little "housewives" for them; and in each they are putting a tiny copy of the Gospel of John, with this note from Lord Roberts written in the front of each: "I ask you to put your trust in God. He will watch over you and strengthen you. You will find in this little book guidance when you are in health, comfort when you are in sickness, strength when you are in adversity."

Excellent advice is here, and is it not all included in our text? Let a man be persuaded that his Redeemer—his and not another's—as if for him alone Christ had died: let him be persuaded that his Redeemer liveth; then he will not want for guidance, comfort, strength.

Surely we to-day can rise to the old patriarch's assurance—we who live in Gospel times, who have seen the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And does not our text also stretch over into the unseen; does it not shed light on the coffin and the tomb? Our Redeemer liveth. He is risen, the first fruits of them that slept. Because He lives, we shall live also.

Made like Him, like Him we rise,  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth." I know in Him I, too, shall live eternally; because He, my Vindicator, my Redeemer, "has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." The truth that was to Job a dream, a vision, a dim possibility, is to us a certainty. We know that our Redeemer liveth, and in His life lies the pledge of our immortality. For "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

## IV

### Salvation by Hope

“ For we are saved by hope.”—ROMANS viii. 24.

HAVE you noticed the mingled grandeur and humility of the words wherewith at the beginning of this greatest of epistles, St. Paul introduces himself to his readers? “ Paul,” he says, “ a servant of Jesus Christ.” “ A servant ” ! What title could be humbler than this ?

Nay, in the original even a lower note is struck. The idea in the Apostle’s mind seems rather to be brought out by our word “ slave.” And this is the man who was free-born, who was so proud of his Roman citizenship, whose wonderful natural powers of mind had in his youth been so carefully trained ! This is the man with the soaring intellect, whose master mind was capable of grasping great truths and building up therefrom much that is known as our Christian theology, who both as preacher and writer stands unsurpassed among the sons of men ; and yet we hear him call himself a servant, a slave ! Ah, but wait. Do not leave the phrase incomplete : “ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.” How the magic of that divine name enlightens and dignifies the humble word that went before !

To be a servant, a slave, in the ordinary sense of the word, that to free-born Paul of the giant intellect and the lion heart would have been impossible.



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To be the servant, the slave, of Jesus Christ : that is his unique title to distinction. It is because of this glorious golden serfdom that we reverence and honour him to-day. We hang upon his words, we strive to follow his thoughts to-day, not because of his rich gifts of head and heart, not because of his learning and his literary gifts, but because he merged his own individuality in the divine personality of his Master, because in him we see reflected the mind of Jesus Christ.

And never did the inspired thought even of this great Apostle soar higher than when he penned this eighth chapter of Romans, this chapter of which the old divines used to say that beginning with "no condemnation," it ended with "no separation." Could he, we wonder, have written it soon after that time in his history when he was caught up into the third heaven, and while his rapt soul was still thrilling to the sound of the celestial harmonies ? We know not, but certain it is that the mere magic and magnificence of the language are unsurpassed ; while the grandeur of the soaring thoughts carries our minds as on angels' wings far beyond the discords of earth, away to an upper, rarer region where all is peace and melody.

And it is from the very heart of this great chapter that we take our text. "We," says the Apostle, "are saved by hope."

I think we read these words with a certain amount of surprise. We have been apt, have we not ? to think of hope as a rather supplementary and non-essential virtue scarcely worthy of the unique place here claimed for it. We have, as it were, pictured hope in our minds as a beautiful fairy queen, radiant indeed and dazzling to the

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eyes, but at best rather ornamental than useful. From our text we find that herein we erred. From our text we find that hope is essential to our salvation: "We are saved by hope."

I ask you to-day to consider first the place of hope in the natural world—its place and its value.

### I. HOPE IN THE NATURAL WORLD

There lies a patient on a bed of sickness; he is tossing in feverish misery and pain, yes, but so long as he keeps his hold on hope you need not quite give him up; vitality is still strong in him, and he will struggle nobly with his pain and languor. But let a change come, let him lose hope, then the chances of his recovery grow infinitely smaller. Doctors and nurses can tell us how patients with hopeless inert dispositions are all the time playing a losing game, and often die when there seems scarce sufficient reason that they should, simply because they had no hope to inspirit and to cheer them. Could we to-day see the names of all who in illness have been veritably saved by hope, I venture to say the list would be a surprisingly long one.

And the same principle holds good in the case of doctors and nurses. They fight a disease quite differently when they feel there is hope. Once they are convinced that the battle is to go against them, then it is almost inevitable that they lose somewhat of their energy and resourcefulness. With the best will in the world it is hard, well-nigh impossible, to keep on struggling when the tide sets hopelessly against us.

Again, look at that man of business. His affairs have become involved: he finds himself on the brink of ruin; yet while hope does not forsake

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him, all is not lost. He can still struggle, he can still manage to keep his head above water, and the odds are great that if hope does not fail him he will find a way out of all his troubles. If you think of hope as a beautiful fairy, scarce fitted for the work of the everyday world, you make a great mistake. I believe she is of all the virtues, so to speak, the most divine-like. She scorns no lowliest service. Away in the humblest cabins of the poor, there she is, down on her knees at her scrubbing-brush, making the conditions of life endurable for the humble dwellers there; while in yonder lordly castle, if she is absent, there is only darkness and despair.

In the natural world, I say once more, hope is essential to happiness and to success. Take away a man's hope, and what joy is left to him in life? Take away a man's hope, and you rob him of his nerve, his energy; you at a stroke cut the sinews of his strength.

Perhaps the most awful description of the abode of the lost is when it is spoken of as a place where "Hope never comes that comes to all."

Through these anxious days, when we know not what news the next telegram may bring, it is our duty to cultivate a patient, persistent hopefulness.

The man or the woman who goes about now with a long face, declaring that things look badly, that the worst of the news is not published, that there is certain to have been disasters at the front of which we have not been told, is doing a disservice to his country. Let such an attitude never be ours. We have, I am persuaded, many things to make us hopeful. We have our old time-honoured traditions, all the glorious

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national history that lies behind us: we have the fact that Britons can be more quickly turned into good soldiers and sailors than any other race of men that ever have lived in the world. Then we have the fact that as a nation we are all of one mind and heart. Such a wave of love and loyalty to our country has swept over the land that, for the time being, lesser differences have been merged in it. We are before all else imperial; and Unionists are working hand to hand with Liberals in one great cause. Our women have nobly responded to the call of duty and are at work with heart and hand doing their great, though so often unnoticed, part in the conflict. Their needles are "a shining store." For our soldiers and sailors they are busy making garments and devising comforts. Then, greatest cause of hopefulness of all, we feel that we are fighting on the side of honour, of truth, and of right; therefore we know that we are not forgotten before God. For all these reasons our national hopes are high. Victory, we are persuaded, will in His good time be ours, and meantime let us in this Christian land be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

I do not forget that this service should be in a measure held as a commemoration of Ulster Day. We are now very near to the second anniversary of that great hour when Protestant Ulster with her very heart's blood signed the Covenant. To-day we cannot help feeling aggrieved and sore. We feel that we have been betrayed. Yet, still we hope. We know that Ulster also is remembered on high, we know that not for nought are our sacrifices and our prayers. We are persuaded that in some way, as yet unknown to us, the Most High will Himself interfere and vindicate our

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cause. Meanwhile, we Ulster men are imperial, not provincial. While our national life is at stake we scorn to press our personal claims or to bargain for our service to our country. Our Unionist Volunteers, with a magnanimity beyond all praise, are enlisting in the King's army, are willing to face danger and death to fight for a country that of late has seemed willing to cast them off. In this glorious attitude can we fail to see a sign of hope? Our men are true patriots. They do not insist on the pound of flesh. They make no bargain, nay, they are willing to fight in the quarrel of those who, they are convinced, have broken faith with them; because they feel that the quarrel was caused by the enemy, and that in honour our Government was bound to go to war. Let it be ours to do our part nobly now, when the larger interests of the Empire are at stake, then, when the fighting time comes, assuredly the province shall not be found wanting to herself. We are still convinced, and ever shall be, that in Union lies our strength, that Home Rule would be disastrous, not only to us, but also to our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, and we are still prepared, when the moment comes, to make great sacrifices, to do and endure anything, rather than be cast out from the Imperial Parliament.

But the present, I say once more, is not a time to air our private grievances, to prosecute our own particular quarrel. We are loyal and true to the core, and never shall it be said of us that "England's extremity was our opportunity."

We love the mother country: we owe everything to her. We do not think of ourselves as a colony, but an integral part of the Empire. We are bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. On

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this, the eve of the anniversary of the signing of the covenant, we Ulstermen are hopeful, and by hope, we are persuaded, we shall be saved. Our hope is in the fair-mindedness of Englishmen, the conviction that the eternal verities *do* rule, and that the great conscience of the land is just. Our hope is in ourselves, for we know that we are true—men and women alike—true as steel to our cause. Our hope is above all in God, who fights, not on the side of the big battalions, but always on the side of truth and righteousness.

I ask you now to consider, secondly, the part that hope plays in the religious life.

### II. THE PART HOPE PLAYS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

I make this distinction for the sake of convenience merely. As the years go on, I am more and more persuaded that life cannot be divided into watertight compartments—one secular, one sacred. I am aware that to the Christian everything should be sacred, and every common bush afire with God. Yet while this is so, I feel it is fitting that before I close I should strive to lift your thoughts higher, higher than the bloody battlefield, higher than the wrangling of politicians. Therefore I say, in our inner, our religious life, there, too, we are saved by hope. So little of religion is tangible. There is so little that we can see, hear, touch. To these eternal truths by which we live we have to cling by faith; and it is hope that gives life and reality to our faith. Hope overrides all adverse circumstances. The most persistently hopeful, happy person it was ever my good fortune to meet, was one who, when she was eighteen, was attacked by a terrible disease, that



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held her for months in the grip of pain, that left her a crippled, helpless wreck. The disease could defeat her body, but never her bright, indomitable spirit. And this quality that saves us from destruction when our world seems going to pieces all around us, this steady hopefulness is no prerogative of the favoured few, it is a blessing that God wants us all to share. Our Father would have us all to be His bright, happy, hopeful children. Do not forget that it was to give us hope that our Saviour died.

This brings us to the centre of our religious life, to Calvary, to the Cross. There our Substitute died and on the third day rose again, that you and I might be saved by hope. We are so constituted that nothing that this life can give can entirely satisfy the soul. It cries out for larger spaces. Time is not enough for it ; it yearns after eternity.

In these instincts divinely implanted in us, we find the earnest of our immortality, but these instincts are shadowy and visionary. It is at the empty grave of Christ that our hopes grow into confidence. In the fact that He, our Representative, conquered death, there we have "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Centre your hope on Him, then for you eternal life has begun already. You, a mortal, have begun to put on immortality ; with you even here in time life is victorious to all eternity. Verily, "we have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil : whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."



## V

### The Secret of Safety\*

“ Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge,  
even the most High, thy habitation ; there shall no evil  
befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.”

PSALM xci. 9 and 10.

Though I have read these two verses in your hearing, I take as my text on this first Sunday of the new year simply the words : “ Because thou hast made the Lord . . . thy habitation.”

Were I to ask you to-day what you considered was Britain's chief glory, I can well imagine that I should receive very different answers. Some would single out our army—so small in numbers, but which through these epoch-making days is proving itself so great in valour and in resolution. Others would point proudly to our fleet—our fleet whose brilliant achievements through glorious bygone years has won for us the great title of “ Mistress of the Seas.”

But proud though we have all good reason to be of our army and our navy, I believe you will agree with me when I say that one of Britain's chief glories lies in the fact that our beloved nation is essentially a nation of homes. Not in the stately halls of the great alone, but also perhaps in still greater measure in the poorest and humblest tenements and cottages—all over the land there

\* Day of National Humiliation and Prayer, Jan 3rd, 1915.

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is fostered a home feeling that is beyond all praise. It is by hearths and firesides often lowly enough, that they have been reared, these soldiers and sailors to whom to-day we, under God, owe our safety.

Home! What a little insignificant word it is, yet how much it stands for! To those of us who are advancing in middle life, it has power to call up pictures sweet and sacred—pictures of the place where our life began, where we first learned to lisp our fathers' and mothers' names, pictures of youthful innocence and contentment. When before the Christmas holidays you speak to the young men and women who are employed in different callings, their very voices take on a softer tone as they tell you that in a few more days they are going home.

Yes, and I suppose no song has ever been written that finds so ready an echo in every heart as the one that tells us,

Be it never so humble,  
There's no place like home.

But to-day I would speak to you for a few moments not of a material home, but of a spiritual. Not of the home of the body, but the grander, loftier, more spacious habitation of the soul. What an ennobling, stimulating thought it is for you and me on this new year Sabbath morning, that we poor, weak, sinful mortals may nevertheless have our home in God! Such surely is the teaching of my text: "Because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation."

Let us think this out together. Let us see what are some of the rooms, the chambers, in this habitation, this home of your soul and mine.

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First, let me say the Lord has for His people the chamber of His own peace.

### I. THE CHAMBER OF GOD'S PEACE

Very sweet to our hearts now is the word *peace*. The papers are full of war news. Our minds are ever on the strain. We know not from hour to hour what the next telegram may tell us. Perhaps we may hear of another murderous raid in England; perhaps the names of more women and children may be added to the already long, long list of innocent victims. As we read the list of horrors that abound in our daily papers, we feel that the old classic poet was in truth right when he pictured war as hell let loose, as the very worst of the scourges that could afflict mankind.

Very sweet, I say again, to our hearts at a time like this, is the word *peace*, and the soul that has found its home in God has entered into a peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

Resting in God, we know what it is to be "quiet from fear of evil." I am sure you will understand what I mean when I say that some of our very worst troubles were things that in the end never touched us at all. It is not so much the evil we meet in life as the *fear of it* that unmans us, and makes us when the testing time comes, unable to play the hero's part. Those whose happy lot it is to have made the Lord their habitation are saved from worry, dread, the horrors of anticipation. Theirs is a peace and a confidence that nothing can shake.

We are told that in the very centre of the maddest swirl of waters, there is one quiet, tiny spot, and this spot is called "the whirlpool's heart of peace." Christian, in the midst of your

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hurrying, restless life, while there is so much to worry, so much to annoy, you may yet have, deep down in your heart, the "peace that passeth all understanding." You will assuredly have it, if through the years you are making for your soul a home in God.

"Not a surge of worry can touch the spirit there."

We read that when Bunyan's Pilgrim came to the House Beautiful, they laid him to rest in a large upper chamber facing the sunrise, and the name of the chamber was Peace. Have you ever been in that large upper chamber, that chamber which after the long night of sorrow catches the first faint rays of dawn? If you are making the Lord your habitation, you know this chamber well.

To the dwellers in this spiritual home, outward circumstances matter not at all. The soldier on the battlefield, if he be Christ's soldier, as well as the soldier of an earthly king, such an one may have more of the herb called "heart's ease," more of God's peace in his bosom, than you and I have in this quiet church to-day. Make then the Lord your habitation, and you shall dwell much in the chamber of His own peace.

Secondly, those who dwell in God are brought by Him into the chamber of His changelessness.

## II. THE CHAMBER OF GOD'S CHANGELESSNESS

We have not advanced far on the journey of life before we begin to realise how much the years can take from us. It is true they give us new joys, new interests, new friends, and sometimes even we "count new things more dear than old." Ah, yes, but still it is true the years *do* take from us

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many things that never can be replaced. It is this fact that makes Christmas, to all save the very young, in truth a sad anniversary, because we are then more than ever conscious of vacant chairs, we then more than ever long

For the touch of a vanished hand  
And the sound of a voice that is still.

How comforting then, amidst changing circumstances, is the thought of an unchanging God! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; and you and I can rest safely, surely, in this beautiful chamber of His changelessness.

Once, some years ago, on a lovely mid-summer day, I visited, with other friends, the little island of Iona, which lies out on the Atlantic, on the West Coast of Scotland. What changes that little sacred island has seen! Columba and his missionaries from there went far and near. There anchored the tiny boat that brought a saint from Ireland. Thither was carried the body of a Scandinavian king that he might be buried in holy ground.

Famine and slaughter visited the island, and later on it knew Queen Margaret's fostering care. But through all changes, through times of prosperity and adversity alike, God's ocean lapped its arms around Iona tenderly, lovingly; the unwearied sun still shines upon it as brightly as in the days before Columba came: still at night the stars come out and look down upon St. Oran's Chapel and the waters of the Sound. Even as the sun and the sky surround and overarch Iona, unchangingly, eternally, so does God's love encircle your life and mine with a tenderness that

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can know no change, whatever else the years may take away.

We stand upon the threshold of 1915, and what changes lie ahead of us we know not ; but if we dwell in God, then He, the Changeless One, is with us, and for us all is well.

Thirdly, for those who make the Lord their habitation, there is a blessed chamber of comfort.

### III. THE CHAMBER OF GOD'S COMFORT

The light is shaded here, the air is still, the ground is holy. The comfort of God, what is it ? Only those who have sorrowed and been comforted of God can tell how tender it is, how sweet. There is a legend that in Paradise, where no tears are shed, there is nevertheless in one corner a grey pool, the pool of the weeping of the world, and those who stoop down and anoint their eyes with that grey water, sing henceforth the sweetest songs that are heard even in Paradise.

What trials and tears may lie in store for you throughout the year we know not ; but of this be assured, should troubles come your way, if you have made the Lord your habitation, He will bring you unto His chamber of comfort, will there speak sweet things to your soul, and your trials will in the end only enable you to sing more triumphantly the songs of the delivered.

" I knew a man in Christ," writes the Apostle Paul. " A man in Christ." There is the highest, holiest manhood possible to the race.

One last word before I close. I have spoken of the changes of life. It is indeed full of uncertainties, and for some of us, along the weeks and months of the coming year there may lie in wait—

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who can tell? "That shadow cloaked from head to foot," the shadow that we call death. Very solemn is the thought that not the strongest of us dares to be so presumptuous as to boast that he shall surely live to see another New Year's Day. But if here we have made the Lord our habitation, then for us the hereafter, once the river of death is crossed, need have no terrors. Heaven will not be to us a country new and strange, if even here on earth we have been dwelling with its King.

In Princess Mary's gift-book which has doubtless been in some of your hands this Christmas, the story is told of Charlie, the Captain of the Peel lifeboat. Charlie was brave with a bravery that surpassed the courage of even his brave companions, and many were the lives that through him were saved from a watery grave.

One day a great storm arose, and the signal went up for the lifeboat, but Charlie could not answer it. Charlie lay dying of heart disease—dying in the prime of his manhood. Later on the storm sank to rest, and there came a great calm, and in the calm Charlie died. "And," says the writer, "his rugged comrades who knew nothing of poetry, but are poets nevertheless to the deepest grain of them, had run up the flag mast-high, (not half-mast) as a signal to the great Pilot of all that here was a soul in the troubled waters of death, waiting for the everlasting lifeboat to bear him to the eternal shore."

The sea of life whereon you and I are sailing is often stormy and troubled, but Christ is the great Pilot. If we put our trust in Him, if as our text has it, we make the Lord our habitation, then, even here and now,

"We make the heaven we hope indeed our home ; "



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then, when we cross the river of death we enter no country new and strange, but

“Heaven, the heart’s true home is reached at last.”

As you are aware, this is the day appointed for national humiliation and prayer. From the King on his throne, down to the lowliest of his subjects, we must surely all feel that it is fitting and right that we should as a nation wait upon God, confessing most humbly our sins of pride and arrogance, our neglect of God’s day, our want of reverence for His most holy laws. At this crisis of our country’s fate, we would most humbly turn to Him, our merciful Father, entreating His face and His favour, and imploring Him in His great pity to protect our soldiers and our sailors, to prosper our cause and the cause of our allies in so far as these causes make for truth and righteousness, and to grant us once more the blessing of peace.

May we as a nation make the Lord our habitation, then for us assuredly all shall be well ; then we shall indeed prosper and have true success.

## VI

### Clarified Vision.

“Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty : they shall behold the land that is very far off.”—ISAIAH xxxiii. 17.

IN order rightly to understand the beautiful chapter from which our text is taken, it is necessary briefly to review its historical setting. The little kingdom of Judah—wonderfully preserved through years that had resounded with the alarms of war—had lately been in an evil case. Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, whose very name spelt terror and destruction, before whose fierce onslaught city after city, country after country, had fallen with a ruin final and complete, Sennacherib had been besieging Jerusalem, and the people's hearts melted and became as water before him. Vainly did Isaiah—great strong prophet of Almighty God—vainly did Isaiah preach to them of faith, confidence, trust in the Lord. None of the sons of men has ever been more brave, more patriotic than he. To his inspired pen we owe odes that have never been surpassed ; from no lips came stronger songs of war ; no heart rejoiced more in the bravery that turns the battle from the gate. But, as has again and again happened in the world's history, Isaiah seems to have concentrated in his own breast the strength, the fire, the courage of an entire generation. His contemporaries were craven-hearted, cringing, cowardly. They counted their material resources only ; they left no margin for faith, for trust, for

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the great moral strength of a righteous cause. Isaiah called upon them not to look around but to look up, not to count the hosts of their boastful enemies, but rather to reckon upon the strong arm of God. And the event justified the prophet. Isaiah's confidence was not misplaced, for a glorious morning came, when the inhabitants of besieged Jerusalem saw the Assyrians no more. Sennacherib was forced to return discomfited to his own land, and in the vainglorious record which he has left behind him of his prowess in war, we find no hint that he was able to prevail against Jerusalem. No, for Jerusalem, the God-guarded, was safe.

And it is just at this glorious crisis in the national history that modern critics tell us the chapter that we read to-day, the chapter from which our text is taken, Isaiah's wonderful thirty-third chapter, was written. Cannot we imagine on what free exultant wings the spirit of the prophet must have risen on this sublime occasion? For this brave, bold Isaiah, this Boanerges, this son of thunder, had nevertheless a heart as tender as ever beat in the bosom of a son of man. He loved his city with a mighty love. He had seen with a patriot's sorrow the days of her darkness and despair, and her deliverance was to him a delight beyond speech. To him this rescue is a very sacrament. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in his eyes. The Lord has remembered Israel, His chosen people. The Lord has been their salvation in the time of trouble. The Lord has broken the bow, and cut the spear in sunder, and burned the chariot in the fire. The Lord of hosts hath done this, and great is His name.

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This chapter is full of sublime utterances, and we shall consider one of them to-day : "Thine eyes," says the prophet, "shall see the king in his beauty : they shall behold the land that is very far off."

It is my purpose to take the different versions of this text, and try to gather lessons from each. The marginal reading in the authorised version is : "Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land of far distances." The Revised version reads : "Thine eyes . . . shall behold a far stretching land," while the Authorised Version itself is as we know : "Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land that is very far off."

Of these three readings we begin with that in the margin of our Bibles : "Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land of far distances."

### I. THE LAND OF FAR DISTANCES

What poetry there is in this rendering ! How the music of the words finds an echo in our hearts ! I think to us who live in this beautiful neighbourhood, they should appeal with special force. Climb a hill anywhere hereabouts, and lo ! you behold a land of far distances. You look over a wide, a varied, a lovely landscape. Wood, water, hills, rolling meadows, all these are mingled in your sight, and form a varied yet a harmonious whole. Verily you do see a land of far distances, and these "distances" are packed with loveliness.

But let us to-day think of these sacred musical words not in a material but in a spiritual sense. Let us strive to apply them to your life and mine—to our lives not in the unknown hereafter that is coming, but to our ordinary everyday life from

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day to day. The words, you see, are a promise. "Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land of far distances." To most of us, I suppose, life is prosaic and commonplace enough. We rise day after day, to find the same dull tasks awaiting us. Somehow they must be got done. No one will dream of praising us if we do them well, though if they are left undone, it is quite possible we may be blamed. Do we therefore complain of our lot? Do we think it circumscribed? Do we feel cabined, cribbed, confined? Do we long for an outlet and fail to find it?

The meanest existence can have a thousand mystic compensations, and not the least of them is this wide, grand outlook, that can see away beyond itself, beyond all sordid surroundings, all daily grinding cares, this large, this wealthy place, this place where God's heaven kisses the earth, this land of far distances.

In the light of this text, we can, believe me, grow reconciled to the most humdrum, monotonous earthly life; for we can have in our souls a window through which we can see visions of loveliness—far-reaching visions, surpassing our commonplace lot. But this thought by no means exhausts the meaning of this view of our text. Let us look at our neighbour, and in its light he, too, is transfigured. There are, it may be, many things about him that annoy and vex us. To live beside him is a trial to our patience. Yet think again. Perhaps we have been taking merely a superficial view of him; perhaps in his character there are good points—far distances which we have hitherto overlooked. Let us henceforth set ourselves to look for these. Let us close our eyes to the mannerisms that annoy us,

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and think only of the substratum of solid worth that underlies these peculiarities, and perhaps we shall be surprised to find that from this man, whom we were wont to consider unamiable, we are learning lessons of practical goodness, of toleration, of large mindedness.

The text also applies to our national life, at this crisis in our history. Even this war with its grim and ghastly details, with its garments rolled in blood, with its pain, its desolation, its despair, even this war has its "far distances," even this war has its place in God's eternal plan which tends ever towards the lasting good of the human creatures whom in His own image He has made. Do not misunderstand me. I am convinced that war is in its very essence un-Christian, that no reasoning can possibly show it in itself to be in any sense Christlike ; yet there are times when to go to war is the only Christian thing to do, and I am persuaded that one of these times came to us as a nation last August.\* We were not ourselves directly threatened. There was no hint of invasion, or of loss for us, yet had we selfishly considered ourselves alone, had we deserted our Allies, when they looked to us for help, then what would have become of our honour ? Should we not then have lost the proud position which by our high-mindedness, our readiness to succour the oppressed, we have won for ourselves through many glorious years ? In a war such as this in which we are now engaged, there are indeed "far distances" ; for are we not fighting for truth, for honour, for a righteous cause, and may we not look up to God with a sure calm conviction that He will defend His own ? It is our duty now as a

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nation to be much in prayer, then assuredly God will open the windows of our souls, and enable us to see the "far distances," the possibilities of ultimate good which are so often concealed in seeming disaster. Let us, as a nation, be firmly persuaded that we are in the hand of God, and that His purposes, even when bombs explode in our towns, and mines sink our ships, are working not for our destruction, but for our highest good; then our eyes are indeed opened, then we can, in love and faith, "behold a land of far distances."

I pass on briefly to consider the Revised Version of our text: "Thine eyes . . . shall behold a far stretching land."

### II. A FAR-STRETCHING LAND

I notice just a shade of difference between this version and the one we have already considered. "A far stretching land." Our life is so short: we undertake many things that we never live to finish; and yet of that life of ours, so brief if counted by months and years, how much under God can be made! The saints and great ones of long ago, were men of like passions, with ourselves, but their lives were a "far stretching land," and were developed and enlarged infinitely.

Our feelings and emotions change with the day, and the hour. They are as variable as our Irish weather, but behind our changing moods lies the changeless fact of the enlarged life that it is possible for each one of us to live in Christ. The poet Cowper who sang so sweetly:

Redeeming love has been my theme  
And shall be till I die,

died as a matter of fact in gloom and despair;



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but an hour after his spirit had gone, there was in his face, says his biographer, "a look of holy surprise." He was marvelling in the presence of Christ, in the glories of the "far stretching land." So let us take heart. For us there are great possibilities, not only hereafter, but also here and now. Let us be up and doing. Let us strive to make this "far stretching land" our own. It is our God-given inheritance, should we but by faith and prayer lay claim to it. "Thine eyes . . . shall behold a far stretching land."

It remains for us now only to consider the Authorised Version of our text, the version with which we are all most familiar. "Thine eyes . . . shall behold the land that is very far off."

### III. THE LAND THAT IS VERY FAR OFF

Long ago I read a book called "The Near and the Heavenly Horizons." I have forgotten almost everything about it save the title, but that is in itself beautiful. In our text the near and the heavenly horizons meet and mingle and are merged the one in the other.

I have spoken already of the circumstances in which these words had their origin. Jerusalem had been straitly besieged, scarcely had the terrified inhabitants dared to lift their eyes beyond the walls till one glorious never-to-be-forgotten day they looked forth, and lo ! the black cloud had rolled away. Gone were the hosts of the Assyrians, and the people saw the rolling land that surrounds Jerusalem cleared of its loud-boasting enemy. Thus, indeed, did their eyes behold a land of far distances, a far stretching land. But Isaiah, prophet, seer, poet, Isaiah,

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under the guidance of God, wrote and spoke larger, greater, nobler things than he himself knew. Taken in one sense these beautiful words of his are a prophecy of the goal whereto our fleeting lives are tending. One day our eyes shall see the heavenly country, the land that in one sense is so very far off, that in another may be for some of us so very near.

Bunyan tells us how the pilgrims wait on this side of the river, and how they know not when they may be called to pass over to the other side. "One day Mr. Ready-to-halt is summoned, and he parts with his crutches for ever." Again all the trumpets are sounding to welcome Mr. Valiant to the celestial city. Even thus is it in life :

Not sweeping up together  
In whirlwind or in cloud,  
In the hush of the summer weather,  
Or when winds are thundering loud ;  
But one by one we go  
To the sweetness none may know.

Once in Switzerland, I saw a sunset of surpassing beauty. The sky was ablaze with tints of crimson and of gold, the snow-capped mountains were flushed to a delicate rosy pink. It seemed as if up there amongst the eternal snows must lie the very gate of Paradise. One day a sight more lovely far than this will enthrall us ; for we read : " Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." " Thine eyes shall behold the King in his beauty : and the land that is very far off."

## VII

### The Never-Failing God

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" . . . . "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."—PSALM xlv. 1 and 11.

AT a place called Groadas, in Norway, there lies a beautiful still lake nestling amongst encircling hills and mountains. As, on a summer evening, you are rowed across its glassy surface, you realise how that lake redoubles the landscape. As you look down into the clear waters, you see reflected there pictures of the surrounding loveliness. Verdant, grassy slopes, picturesque farmhouses clinging to the green hillsides; further off still, mountains white with eternal snow—all these things seem to lie below you. The limpid lake holds them as it were in its own pearly bosom. It mirrors and reflects them one by one.

And the book of Psalms is, it seems to me, like that lovely Groadas lake. It seems to hold within itself all the other books of the Bible. Whatever is best and loveliest in prophecy, history, or epistle is mirrored and reflected there. What groups of readers and worshippers gather round these grand old psalms. Here are the saints of the world finding here and here alone fitting words to express their holy adoration, and their praise. But the saints are not alone; the Psalter is the book for sinners also. The fifty-first Psalm is, as one has

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said, "the prodigals' highway back to pardon, to heaven and to God." The souls that are in sorrow, the hearts that beat high with joy—here they all congregate, here they find full expression for their inmost thoughts. From the man who is praising and extolling the God of his salvation, to him who is so troubled that he cannot speak, every one finds his picture in this wondrous book. There an inspired singer has, centuries before him, thought his very thoughts, rejoiced at his joy, sorrowed for his troubles. To read the book of Psalms is in truth to read the devotional history of mankind. And of no individual psalm is this more true than of the forty-sixth from which our text ~~to-day~~ is taken.

### I. THE HISTORY OF THIS PSALM

A short sketch of the history of this Psalm, which I lately read and have slightly altered, is interesting:—It is the fourteenth century. The Russians, our present allies, are in sore trouble. They are beset by great Tartar hordes. They are like to be engulfed in an overwhelming tide of ruin. Then a great, a holy man—Sergius the hermit, was his name—roused his countrymen, led them on to face the foe; and when at the sight of the terrible Tartar host his own heart began to quail, he renewed his energy by reciting aloud the forty-sixth psalm. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." He recited, I say, these grand words, then plunged into the battle, and, strong in the strength of the Lord, smote his enemies before him, and won a victory final and complete.

The years roll on, and here is a saintly monk. He is full of courage and daring. He has defied

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pope and cardinal. He has preached at the risk of his life the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But was Luther always courageous, always on the crest of the wave? No, he had his moods, just as you and I have; and when doubt, discouragement, darkness were creeping over his soul, he was wont to say to his friend Melancthon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

We pass on now to England, and our own great Oliver Cromwell is opening his second parliament. He exhorts the parliament to remember that their great work should be to make England an emblem of heaven, where God's will reigns supreme; and he closed with these wonderful words: "If you set your hearts to it, you will sing Luther's psalm," meaning Psalm forty-six. "That," continued he, "is a rare psalm for a Christian; 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' If Pope and Spaniard and Devil set themselves against us, yet in the name of the Lord we shall destroy them. 'The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.'"

We come on now to the close of the eighteenth century, and at the Chapel House of the City Road, London, John Wesley lies dying. What are the last words the great preacher, whose voice wakened slumbering England, is heard to utter? They are these: "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

One last incident, ~~ere I close this rapid survey of the history of this psalm.~~ It is Sunday in far away India in the January of 1842. The news of the terrible Cabul disaster has been carried to the nearest fortified place, where the little garrison of Englishmen seemed, humanly speaking, helpless behind their poor defences of crumbling mud.

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But there was in that garrison a young subaltern, one who was able to say ere he died: "I have for forty years so ruled my life that when death came I might face it without fear." This youth, as there was no chaplain in the city, read the service on the Sunday following the bad news. He chose as a special portion the forty-sixth Psalm, told his comrades how Luther was wont to use it in seasons of special difficulty, exhorted the men to courage and dependence upon God; and so that little band of Englishmen, inspired by the faith of Henry Havelock, held the fortress till help came.

Now, I say to you, has not this forty-sixth Psalm a wonderful history? Does not it carry in the strong tide of its magnificent words the love, the loyalty, the heroism and the faith of generations of brave men?

Let us ask ourselves secondly what do these verses mean to you and me in this twentieth century?

### II. WHAT THESE WORDS MEAN TO-DAY

We, too, stand at a crisis in our fate. War is in our gates, and we know not what news the next telegram, the next paper may have to tell us. In what spirit are we facing the unknown future? Do we know aught of the quiet confidence of the writer of this psalm, who, away back in the youth of the world, was able to sing so sweetly of his trust in God? It is hard, ah, how doubly hard now, when as a nation we have "such compelling cause to grieve"; it is hard, I say, to look away from the long drawn out battle line, away to God, who is the "refuge and strength" of His people,

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“ a very present help in trouble.” The sorrow of the world ! How black it is, how bitter, how well-nigh universal !

A few weeks ago some of the Red Cross workers found the dead body of a German officer. In his breast pocket this letter was found, this letter from his wife : “ My dearest heart, when the little ones have said their prayers, and prayed for their dear father and gone to bed, I sit and think of thee, my love. I think of all the old days when we were betrothed, and of all our happy married life. Oh, Ludwig, why should people fight each other ? I cannot think that God would wish it.” And to-day, in some German home, that wife, a widow now, is weeping her heart out to think that never any more in this world will she see the husband of her love. Oh, the sorrow that already in this year 1915, that is still so young, has come to countless hearts ! Do we not need a word of comfort, a word of cheer ? And we find it in this old, old psalm. We find it as away from the din of arms, away from the confusion of the battle-field, we turn our thoughts to God and heaven. He is the refuge and strength of His people, wheresoever they may be. Nay, He uses the clash of arms, the fury of the fight, the danger and the death to bring out the best and the noblest that is in men.

We have read in our daily papers stories of love, of generosity, of self-sacrifice, which have thrilled our souls, and we have felt that these men who so nobly died for others were in no true sense dead, but were immortalised, had been absorbed into that glorious band of heroes who have made our army and our navy the wonder of the world. I say again, as so often I have said before, this is



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a just war. It was forced upon us against our will. Thousands of husbands, fathers, sons, must pass out of the body ere peace is restored. Yet God is their refuge and strength also: God is their very present help in trouble. And they are not dead, these heroes. They have awakened from the dream of life. They are more truly living than ever they have been before.

Away far back in our English history, we read how good old Bishop Fisher, condemned to death, because he would not say "No" to his conscience, approached the block with the New Testament in his hand. As he opened it at a venture, he read, "This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God." God was the refuge and strength, the very present help in trouble of Bishop Fisher, as He is the refuge and strength of our soldiers and sailors, as He is willing to be the refuge and strength of you and me. Not one of His promises has ever failed. He is our God as He was the God of our fathers. He is as near to us in our extremity as ever He was to them. Truly this psalm is a song of faith in troublous times. "God is our refuge." It is when trouble is upon us, "when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall," it is then we need a refuge, a shelter, a covering. And God is to His people a place of retreat, a shelter, where "in life, in death, eternally they can be safe."

Long ago in ancient Israel, a merciful God-given law ordained that there should be "cities of refuge" throughout the land, places where the hunted, persecuted man could fly to and be safe. And these cities of refuge were types of Christ. He and He only is our true city of refuge. He is our dwelling-rock whereto we ever may resort.

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Even as the cities of refuge were open continually, even as their gates were not shut day or night, so is our refuge in Christ available for us at all times. God is our refuge. Again God is our strength. We need strength, you and I. We are conscious of our weakness. We know how prone we are to fall into sin. When temptations assail us, our good resolutions too often go for naught. Let us learn to-day once more the lesson of our own weakness, but let us remember also that God is our strength ; and if we remember this, then in truth His strength will be made perfect in our weakness. When we are weak, then like the great Apostle shall we be truly strong. God is our help, ever near, ever powerful, ever ready to aid us. Let us call upon God in prayer. Let us as a nation look up to Him. Let us seek in Him our refuge, our strength, our very present help in trouble, then with us assuredly all shall be well. In His mighty hands are the issues of life and of death. He doeth all things and doeth all things well. " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." " The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

When the Huguenots and the Covenanters of Scotland were in trouble, they used to say :  
" Come and let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm " :—

God is our refuge and our strength,  
In straits a present aid ;  
Therefore, although the earth remove,  
We will not be afraid.

And doubtless at this troublous time in our nation's history, these words are proving in the hearts and lives of many of our people that they have lost none of their ancient power.

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In many a darkened home, in many a sorely tried heart, they have been the means of bringing light and cheer. They have taught men that in the hour of trial there is One and One only to whom they can go and who has ever proved Himself "in straits a present aid." Happy is he who can at all times say: "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord of hosts is with me; the God of Jacob is my refuge."

## VIII

### Perpetual Provision

“ For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.”

I KINGS xvii. 14.

MORE than twenty years ago, a new class of literature appeared amongst us, and sprang immediately into almost universal favour. Dealing as it did with humble unnoticed events and individuals, it was called “ The Kailyard School.” J. M. Barrie was its founder, and to my thinking its best exponent. The sight of smoke issuing from the minister’s guest-chamber, the advent of an unexpected visitor, the buying of a cloak with beads—happenings as commonplace as these are endowed with an interest so vital, and so living, that Kirriemuir in Scotland, where these things are supposed to have occurred, has become a place of pilgrimage for thousands ; while we feel that the characters, Jess and Hendry and Leeby, are personal friends of our own. And can we not well believe that J. M. Barrie, when writing these simple chronicles of the poor took for his model this chapter which we read together this morning, this chapter where the sacred veil that hides the inner recesses of family life is for a moment drawn aside, this chapter where we find ourselves suddenly face to face with a tragedy in humble life ?

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These were days of stress and strain in Israel. For long drawn out days and weeks and months, the blessed life-giving rain had failed to fall. Morning after morning, the heavens had been as brass, and the sun had beamed down pitilessly on a world which seemed to grow hourly browner and barer. Now the streams had almost gasped to death, and grim famine was stalking gaunt and relentless over the land. And in Zarephath, in that little far away corner of the world, away outside the bounds of ancient Israel, away by the shore of the many-sounding sea—there, a widow, poor, helpless, friendless, was facing alone, with such strength and courage as she could muster, the stern realities of that stern time. Can we not picture how the mother heart within her grew sad and ever sadder as day after day the meal in the barrel decreased, as day after day the oil in the cruse dwindled till at last the inevitable end seemed to have come, till one never-to-be-forgotten day she went forth to gather a few sticks that she and her son might eat their last meal together? One never-to-be-forgotten day, I called it, for that day this nameless widow met the prophet. This was in truth the day of days to her. She went forth in sorrow; she returned in joy.

We read the story together, therefore it is needless for me to enlarge upon it. The verses give it in all its sweet simplicity. It remains for us only during the next few minutes to gather up some of the lessons which this old, old story has to teach us.

First, I would ask you to notice how the providence of God takes note of the smallest details of our lives.

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### I. GOD'S PROVIDENCE NOTES THE SMALLEST DETAILS OF OUR LIVES

Elijah, the great, strong, stern prophet was now in an evil case. Like a whirlwind he appears for the first time in the pages of sacred history, appears to rebuke wickedness, appears to foretell disaster. We picture him standing in the presence of Israel's wicked king, standing resolute and undaunted, proclaiming the majesty of Israel's offended God, foretelling the drought, with the accompanying ruin and desolation that were to fall upon the land. Like a whirlwind, I say, he appeared before Ahab; like a whirlwind, he was gone. "Get thee hence," said the word of the Lord, "and hide thyself." But the divinely-found refuge availed for a time only. After a while, as the dreary, rainless months went on, the prophet's brook dried up, and starvation, or death by the hand of an angry king, stared him in the face. But God had not forgotten His prophet.

We can picture Elijah watching the brook, as day by day it shrank and grew small; we can imagine how then his faith was tested and tried, but an All-seeing Eye was also on that brook, and no sooner was it dry than another refuge was provided for Elijah. To reach Zarephath, his new habitation, he was forced to take an arduous journey across the parched, barren, hunger-bitten land. Yet not a moment did the prophet hesitate. Somehow the weary miles were traversed, at last he reached Zarephath, saw the widow at her mournful task, recognised in her the woman he had been sent to seek, asked her for water and a morsel of bread, heard her pitiful story, and gave her a

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wonderful promise, the promise of our text: "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." Can we fail to see in this narrative unmistakable tokens of God's tender love and care, a love and care lavished ungrudgingly on the smallest details?

The Lord is so infinitely great, so highly exalted above us, that we are prone at times to doubt if He could condescend to notice us, His feeble, frail children. In the light of a history such as this we can surely doubt no more. That God should care for Elijah, great strong prophet that he was, unfaltering, fearless witness for the truth, this, we feel, is wise and right; but that the same minute and special Providence should also be busy with a poor Zarephath widow, should look upon her as she goes on her dolorous way, should be busy with her needs, should arrange for their supply, here surely is a miracle of love and tenderness beautiful beyond our utmost thought. Nor is this by any means a solitary instance in Holy Writ of the love lavished upon obscure persons.

Here is a woman going forth to her daily duty. She is a simple woman, and what she is doing is neither grand nor romantic. She is going to draw water from the well, as generations of her ancestors had done before her, as she had in all likelihood done herself countless times before. But this one day differs from all the rest. This one day she meets the Saviour, and to her is revealed first her sin, then the possibility of salvation. She leaves that place realising that she has in truth met the Christ.



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Here are two men journeying sadly along the road leading forth from Jerusalem. Their talk is mournful exceedingly, for they speak of vanished hopes, of dreams and visions that they felt could never be realised. Then a mysterious Stranger met them, and ere He left them, their sorrow had been turned to everlasting joy.

Examples such as these of the minute fostering care of Providence abound, believe me, not in the Scriptures alone but in every human life. Review thoughtfully the way that the Lord has led you all these years, and tell me if the journey is not marked by providential deliverances, by proofs that, Cyrus-like, the Lord has girded you, though perhaps you have not known Him. Surely, like R. L. Stevenson, you must admit that you have been piloted through the shoals of life like a well-directed ship, and that the name of the Great Steersman has been God.

Secondly, this history teaches us that man's extremity is God's opportunity.

### II. MAN'S EXTREMITY, GOD'S OPPORTUNITY

Was ever woman in worse plight than this poor widow? She was gathering sticks to cook her last scanty meal. Resources she had none. That one meal eaten, death stared her and her son in the face. There were no charity organisations in those stern old days, no philanthropic societies to which she could apply. Then, just when human help had failed, God Himself stepped in: the need was supplied, and the widow's tears were dried.

Surely we ponder this history with a fresh and living interest in this crisis of our nation's fate.

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You know the history of this war. You know how our small army, outnumbered, surrounded, at times well-nigh overwhelmed, made a gallant stand, fought all through the day, then retreated all the long weary night. You know how the tramp, tramp, tramp, of those weary, blood-stained, retreating feet echoed in our hearts and brain, making us deaf to all other sounds. But not for ever was this retreat to continue ; not for ever. At last the reinforcements, the ammunition came ; at last the victorious advance of our enemies was stayed ; at last hope shone out again, and the courage and bravery of our soldiers began to reap its due reward. And now we look into the future with confidence and hope. Our cause is God's. He will Himself become General. So long as the English flag represents, as it has ever represented, honour, truth and uprightness, so long will it continue to float, unconquered and unconquerable, in God's free air. God will Himself fight with us, and our extremity will but prove His glorious opportunity. We are fighting against an enemy that is using every means, fair and foul, to accomplish our overthrow. The sinking of the *Lusitania*, the use of asphyxiating gas, are methods of warfare to which we have not been accustomed in dealing with the most savage tribes. The day of reckoning for these things will sooner or later come ; and the cause which has truth, righteousness and liberty emblazoned on its banner, will in the end assuredly prevail.

Truth, crush'd to earth, shall rise again :  
The eternal years of God are hers ;  
But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,  
And dies among his worshippers.

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Again this story teaches us a lesson of unselfishness.

### III. A LESSON OF UNSELFISHNESS

Put yourself in this poor widow's place. She has in her house one meal, no more. An unknown visitor comes to her and says, "Bake me a little cake first." What would most of us have said under the circumstances? I fear, squarely and uncompromisingly, "No!" Had this poor widow spoken thus, she would indeed have saved her miserable handful of meal, but she would have lost the very source of unfailing supply.

It may be you and I are infinitely poorer to-day, because of our short-sighted miserable selfishness. How know we what rich blessings we may have missed, because in striving to grasp the little we have lost the much. I am convinced that every opportunity of doing a kindness which we selfishly or carelessly miss leaves us poorer, not, it may be in pounds, shillings and pence, but poorer in what is of infinitely greater value—poorer in character and in heart.

This is a time in our nation's history that demands from one and all great sacrifices. It is the plain duty of some to go to fight the foe; others, with oh! what breaking hearts, must see their loved ones go forth to face wounds and death. In this time of national strife, all, I say once more, are called upon to make sacrifices. Let us strive to make them cheerfully, hopefully, unselfishly.

Let me, ere I close, lift your eyes away from Zarephath, away from the poor widow, away even from the great Elijah, away to Calvary, away to Christ. There, you see the world's everlasting

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wonder, the wonder of unselfish love. There, you see the Son of God, dying that you and I might live. As we stand in the shadow of the Cross of Christ, are we not constrained to say :

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small ;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all ?

## IX

### The Unchanging Christ

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”—HEBREWS xiii. 8.

THE epistle to the Hebrews was written at a time of great political and religious agitation. The Jewish state was still existing, but it was plainly drawing near to its end. Change and unrest were in the very air and everything pointed to a swift, sudden, and disastrous national upheaval. The fanatics, who then ruled at Jerusalem, were powerless to do aught to avoid the coming storm of destruction; nay, they seemed blind to the fact that such a storm was plainly at hand, and rushed on, leading their unhappy countrymen with them, headlong towards the utter ruin wherein all were so soon to be involved. At such a time the fate of professing Christians was, to the outward view, singularly unhappy.

Persecuted with equal bitterness by the Pharisees who ruled in Jerusalem, and by the Romans who with iron hand then governed the world, the Christians stood friendless, alone, with no earthly power able or willing to protect them. And just at this crisis when personal violence, spoliation of property, aye, and death by fire and sword, was the frequent portion of the Christian—just at this crisis the epistle to the Hebrews was written—this glorious epistle, which in the midst of

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a world that seemed crumbling to ruins, speaks in such triumphant tones of things that cannot be shaken, this epistle which, while change and decay are all around, has for its one theme, the changeless Christ.

Since the days we have been speaking of centuries have rolled away. What changes this old world has seen with the passing years ! What great world powers have risen and decayed ! What new worlds have been discovered ! How numerous have been the inventions of science ! How manifold are the discoveries that have ennobled and enriched the race ! We have learned, and are learning so much. The child at school to-day knows many useful things whereof the wisest of our fathers were ignorant. And yet it seems to me that, just as the Hebrew Christians centuries ago needed before all else to have their eyes lifted up from a changing world to an unchanging Christ, so, too, do we. We too, are living to-day in a time of stress and strain. Our hearts are on the continent, as we eagerly follow the details of the long drawn-out battle. Our hearts are with the soldiers and sailors of our people, who so willingly are offering themselves for their country and the safety of our homes. We rush for the daily papers ; we wait anxiously for the latest telegrams ; for we know not what changes the days, even the very hours, may bring. It is a time that is big with destiny. Great issues hang upon the decisions of Cabinets and of generals. So to the restless hearts here to-day I would bring this restful message : " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

I think there is nothing that appeals to us more strongly than stability, permanence. Our own

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earthly lives are so short, we naturally reverence anything that lasts. We look with awe and wonder upon structures such as the pyramids of Egypt because they are grey with the dust of ages, while you and I can hope at most for little beyond the three score years and ten. We demand of love and friendship before all things else that they should be lasting, and old songs, such as "Darby and Joan," touch our hearts because of the note of permanence that they strike.

Always the same, Darby, my own,  
Always the same to your old wife, Joan.

And the inspired writer, understanding this yearning instinct in our passing, fleeting, swift-changing human life, appeals to it strongly when he speaks to us mortals, so conscious of our mortality, of an unchanging Christ: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Our subject divides itself quite naturally into three lines of thought. We have the Christ of the past, the Christ of the present, and the Christ of the future: the Christ of yesterday, the Christ of to-day, the Christ of all the unknown to-morrows that are yet to be.

### I. THE CHRIST OF THE PAST

Would we see the Christ of the past; how can we do so save by turning to the Gospels where we have four matchless portraits painted for us, portraits of the Christ of yesterday—of those old yesterdays that dawned in Palestine so many years ago. What do we know of Christ in the past? What do we know of Him, let us say, in relation to those two great outstanding facts of life—sin and suffering? How did Christ deal with sin in those bygone yesterdays of His earthly life?



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How, but pitifully, tenderly, gently. Hating the sin as none ever hated it, He yet loved and forgave the sinner. Take some examples from the beautiful Gospel record. Here is a woman whose iniquity has been found out. What has the law to say to her? Hard, stern, and uncompromising is the edict: "Such should be stoned." What said the Christ, the pure, the sinless One? "Let him that is without sin amongst you cast the first stone." And can we not picture her would-be judges as abashed, conscious-stricken, they one by one slunk away. Then the gentle voice of love is heard once more: "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." Again we read of our Saviour that when He would pass from Judæa to Galilee, "He must needs go through Samaria." Do you read in that a mere geographical necessity, because Samaria lay between? If so, you greatly err. There was another way from Judæa to Galilee, the way the Jews always took; and had Jesus been like the Pharisees, He would have chosen that better way, that His holy feet might not be defiled with Samaritan dust. But Christ must needs go through Samaria that day because He had saving work to do, because there was a poor outcast woman—a sinner—waiting for Him, because in that degraded land there was a soul that was to learn to sing:

Jesus sought me while a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God.

There is a man, a publican, an outcast, to the Jewish mind beyond the pale of hope, of recognition, of salvation. A sinner, yes, but Christ saw beneath the sin a soul most precious. He called to him, "Follow me," and Matthew the publican was changed to Matthew the Evangelist.

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In Palestine, the Christ of yesterday sought sinners and saved them, loved them into newness of life. In Palestine,

Sinners gathered round Him,  
Lepers sought His face,  
None too vile or loathsome  
For a Saviour's grace.

Nay, the Pharisees found in this very thing one of their chief causes of complaint against Him. "This man," said they, "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." And thus, though they knew it not, did these Pharisees—sour, vindictive men that they were—sound the very highest note in praise of Him whose name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. Thus did Christ deal yesterday with the problem of the world's sin. Tenderly He received the sinner, freely He forgave the sin.

And what of the world's sorrow? How did He meet that? Amply do the Gospels answer this question. Can you not hear even yet the echo of His divine voice calling the weary and the heavy-laden to His side? Was not His advent to any town or village in Palestine the signal for the suffering and the sad to crowd around Him? When was He too weary to listen to the cry of distress?

It would be interesting to reckon the number of times that we read in the Gospels that Jesus was touched with compassion. Here is a woman in dire trouble: she is praying for a certain thing, but she is not even an Israelite, and the disciples' advice to their Master is: "Send her away, for she crieth after us."

But what troubled soul, I ask you, did Jesus ever send away? He called her "daughter";

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He granted her petition ; He sent her away rejoicing. Ask what Jesus was yesterday. Why, He was the Rest of the weary, the Restorer of sight to the blind, the Bread of the hungry, the Pardoner of sin. It was His glorious mission to bring light and hope where had reigned darkness and despair. If in the New Testament we trace the dark stain of sin and suffering, we find also in abundant measure the golden glory of Christ's forgiving love, of His constant, comforting care. Such was Christ yesterday : Rest-giver, Light-bringer, Redeemer from sin, and all the rest of the glorious list ; but what is He to-day ? What is He in the present ?

### II. THE CHRIST OF THE PRESENT

Jesus Christ the same to-day. After all, your life and mine is lived not in any beautiful yesterday, not in a possible radiant to-morrow, but in the throbbing, pulsing, living present. It is now that we feel the stress and strain of life, and we cannot live altogether in the memory of past achievements, or on the hope of possible blessings yet to come. And I believe it is this very fact, this tyranny of the present, that gives to the world its power over us. When worldly, it may be sinful pleasures are offered to us now, to-day, we are tempted to seize these passing pleasures without waiting to count to-morrow's possible pains. In our youth the world seems to have so much to offer us ; what has Christ, if we choose Him, to give ? This, His own unchangeableness : " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day." We have seen what He was yesterday, to-day He is still the loving, tender Saviour.

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Are you conscious of your sin ; do you feel like the great Apostle, that when you would do good evil is present with you ? If so, the Sin-pardoner, the unchanging Christ, is the Saviour for you. Are you in sorrow ; is the trouble so deep that it may be you dare not whisper it in any human ear ? Then come to Christ. Just how He will comfort you, none can tell ; but certain it is that He has never yet failed to reveal Himself to the earnest seeking, troubled soul.

And in this strenuous to-day in which we are living, this time of national crisis, it is our duty as Christians to be much and often in prayer, to ask for God's blessing upon our cause, which is, we are persuaded, the cause of truth and honour ; and humbly confessing our sins, national and personal, to strive to turn from them to the merciful, long-suffering God, whom too often we have forgotten. Thus may you and I live out our present to purpose, if we learn to turn more fully to this same Jesus, whose name we first learned to lisp beside our mother's knee.

I do not think it is either the haunting memory of a bitter past, or the dread of an unknown and may be disastrous future, that most appals us. I believe it is rather the monotony of to-day, to-day that so often seems " weary, flat, stale and unprofitable," which unnerves us, and at times makes us faint and fail. But for to-day also we have the unchanging Christ. " He knoweth our frame." He understands : He, who for years wrought at a carpenter's bench at Nazareth. He understands the grind and the weariness and the ~~the~~ monotony of life, understands and sympathises and cheers us by His love. So as the days slowly pass and change into yesterdays, do we learn life's

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supreme lesson, the lesson that it is possible to walk and not to faint.

I pass on to my last thought :

### III. THE CHRIST OF THE FUTURE

“ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”

Let us plan our lives never so carefully, not the wisest here can foretell what is to happen next year, to-morrow, an hour hence. All this is written only in the book of God's foreknowledge ; but of one thing we can be certain, all through life, and beyond time into eternity, we can have with us an unfailing Friend. It is an essential of true friendship that it should be permanent. Alas ! how small a thing is sometimes strong enough to sever the most firmly cemented friendships of earth ! A real or a fancied slight, a misunderstanding, some hasty word rashly spoken, and the friends are friends no longer. Or even though the hearts may remain faithful and true, death, the great divider, comes, and the lives are put so far apart,

They cannot hear each other speak.

Some day we hear that our friend has passed before us into the unseen, leaving an empty chair, and a sacred memory of kind words spoken, of good deeds done. Such are the inevitable changes of time. Let us look away from these to the unchangeable Christ. In life, in death, eternally, He is with us, with us to comfort and to bless. The same for ever, that includes everything : our future years of life, the eternity we hope to spend in glory. Let us seek to know this perfect Friend on earth, then to us the better country

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which lies beyond the river of death will not be a place new or strange.

“One night in Scotland an awful storm was raging. The snow was deep and the wind was howling round the hut where a good old elder lay dying. His daughter brought the family Bible to his bedside. ‘Father,’ she said, ‘will I read a chapter to ye?’ But the old man was in sore pain, and only moaned. She opened the book. ‘Na, na, lassie,’ he said, ‘the storm’s up noo; I theekit (thatched) my hoose in the calm weather!’” This man had made his peace with God, then when the pains of death were on him, he had no hasty, late preparations to make.

Learn to know Jesus to-day, then through all the possible to-morrows of life you will find Him the same. Learn to know Him as your Friend and Saviour in time, then in eternity He will receive you to glory.

Before Bunyan’s Pilgrim left the house Beautiful he was taken to the top of the house and bidden to look south, and there he saw a lovely country with hills and dales, waving woods and rivers, which country those who were with him told him was called Immanuel’s land. One day, by God’s great mercy, you and I hope to enter the Better Country; but if we have known Christ here, then that land will not be to us a country new and strange, for the unchanging Christ, the Christ not only of yesterday, and to-day, but also of that glorious unknown to-morrow, will be there to welcome us, and we shall look

Not at the Crown he gifteth,  
But on His piercèd hand :  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel’s Land.

## X

### Fighting Under Difficulties

“Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, he slew the two sons of Ariel of Moab : he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow.”

I CHRONICLES xi. 22 (R.V.).

A SAINTLY old minister once horrified his hearers by saying : “Brethren, the Bible is a wonderful book if it is true ; and it is also a wonderful book if it is not true.” He horrified his hearers I say ; yet let us look calmly at what he said, and I think we shall see that nothing irreverent was intended by the good old man. The Bible is a wonderful book if it is true. Who shall deny this ? It is the record of man’s sin and God’s free grace in salvation. It is the one and only book that professes to lead men from death and darkness and despair on to light and life and liberty. It is our guide through the mazes of life’s mysteries on to the place where in the noonday clearness of the celestial city we shall see no more through a glass darkly, but at last face to face ; the place where the problems that perplex us here shall all be fully solved, where in God’s bright eternal morning we shall gladly reap the far off interest of our tears. It is fairly packed with promises, endless, boundless, sublime in their scope and extent. It guarantees us help, strength, comfort,



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courage, resolution, safety, victory over sin, a crown of eternal life and glory—present security, future bliss. It promises us sufficient store of all the graces and virtues wherein our poor starved souls are so sadly lacking. Do we believe all this? Do we not merely *say* we believe it; but have we come, humbly yet boldly, to claim our share of these “exceeding great and precious promises?” If so, then we can say, from happy blessed experience, that the Bible is a wonderful book, because we have proved it true.

Then take the old minister’s second declaration: “The Bible is a wonderful book if it is not true.” Think for a moment what the Bible has done. It has been for centuries the world’s undying, unfailing missionary. It has kept alive a martyred Christian Church for years. Kept it alive, said I? Nay, it has done far more. Hidden in the holes of the earth, read only in secret and under threats of unthinkable pains and penalties, it kept the Church of Madagascar through twenty-five years of fiery persecution, not only merely alive, but growing. Wherever it has been studied the same miraculous result has followed: men have been uplifted; savage, naked cannibals are to-day clothed and in their right minds, because they know that to them the voice of God has spoken. To relate the history of the Bible, what is it save to relate the history of the uplifting of mankind? The truths in this book, the very majesty of the language, the very music of the words: these are so embedded in our hearts, so interwoven with the very fibres of our being, that to root them out would be impossible. All our best and purest impulses; all that is noblest in our lives, we feel that we owe to our knowledge of the

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Bible; and that a book which has achieved results so far-reaching and sublime is not in its very essence God's holy truth, would be indeed miraculous, impossible, unthinkable.

To-day, you and I say, reverently, gratefully: "The Bible is a wonderful book, because we know from happy experience that it is true." And in none of its many wonderful aspects is this Bible of ours more wonderful than in this; that I care not what our circumstances, I care not what our mood, we find a reflex in its pages, we find there something to suit our case.

Just now our hearts are aglow with pride as we read the stirring record of the great doings of what our enemies called a "contemptible little army." I suppose that in these war times valour is really the quality that we most admire. We envy those heroes who on land and sea, or in the air, are winning national gratitude, a world-wide reputation, and the Victoria Cross. Courage: what a splendid manly quality is it! How we admire it! How our hearts are thrilled as we gladly realise that our great mother country has not forgotten to rear the grand old race of heroes! Therefore is there not something in the portions we read this morning from the Old and New Testaments that finds a special echo in our souls to-day, those chapters which tell us how the great of old fought, and struggled, and agonised, and came out victorious—came out victorious, though it may be victory cost them their earthly lives?

To-day, we are to deal with a somewhat obscure hero. We all know the great deeds of Samson, of Gideon, of David, of Peter and of Paul; but I wonder how many of us, if Benaiah the son of Jehoiada were mentioned, could tell what he did

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to win for him a place in the Bible glory-roll of heroes. To-day it is my desire, like a modern Old Mortality, to rub a little of the dust of the centuries off his epitaph, and his name. To-day, I wish to hold him up to you as an immortal type of a man who triumphed over circumstances, who from uncongenial and disheartening surroundings wrested not defeat but victory: "He went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow."

Let us consider first, Benaiah in depressing circumstances.

### I. BENAIAH IN DEPRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES

Think of it. Everything was against this man. There was the weather: it was a time of snow, a time when

Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
And milk comes frozen home in pail.

It was a time when the ingle-nook and the fire called almost irresistibly; when to face the elements at all meant courage and self-sacrifice. Think how often you have laid the blame of your own laziness, your own slackness, about beginning work, upon the weather. Think what a staple of conversation it is; how often we have inveighed against it, how often we have all said: "Impossible to go out on such a day." Verily, so long as we have the weather as a last resource, we are in little danger of becoming like the man in the song, who complained that he had "nothing whatever to grumble at." Think of all this, and admire the valour of this Old Testament hero, Benaiah, who rose superior to difficulties, who faced adverse surroundings, who in a time of snow

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went manfully forth at the call of duty. Well can I imagine that others, his companions, heard that call in vain. Well can I believe that when the roar of the great king of beasts resounded through the village or the valley or along the mountain side where Benaiah lived, that dread sound failed to rouse other sluggish hearts in Israel.

The snow lay deep, the wind blew cold,  
The day was dark and drear ;

and, conquered by conflicting circumstances, all remained like cowards at home—all but Benaiah. All honour to the undaunted hero as he presses forth on his lonely way through the snowdrifts, presses forth to single combat, it may be to death ! The elements had no terrors for this man. The call of duty in his heart was stronger than all else. He slew a lion in a time of snow ; but there was more than this. We read also that he performed this valiant deed “ in the midst of a pit.” These pits were really cisterns formed for the storing of the water that in the East is often so scarce and at all times so precious. To descend into them was always a work of danger, and many met a terrible death in the gloom and filth of their dark depths.

To descend into such a place, now doubly dangerous because it had become the lair of a wild beast ; to fight the lion alone, with none to cry, “ Go on, brave heart : well done ” ! To face the probability of an unnoticed, unrecorded death—this was surely to be a hero, this was in truth to wrestle with adverse circumstances. As we think of these things, we feel that Benaiah deserved his glorious name, which means literally : “ The man God built ” ; for none save a man constructed

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by the Divine Architect could be so brave and so strong.

We pass on now, secondly, to consider Benaiah's triumph over adverse circumstances.

### II. BENAIAH'S TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES

He conquered, this great, valiant man. He did his great deed. He won glory and immortality. He gained his niche, honourable, though small, in the glorious picture gallery of the Word of God. He slew the lion, slew him in a time of snow, slew him down in the gloomy obscurity of a pit.

The world's great work has always been done in the face of criticism, and contrary winds, and adverse circumstances. If we wait for everything to be on our side, for soft Lydian airs of favour, for approbation, for the plaudits of admiring friends : if we wait for such conditions before we attempt things great and good, then I very much fear our life-work will never be done at all. Like Benaiah, to take our circumstances as they are, and undauntedly to fight our way through them : this is the path that leads to true success.

I know no better illustration of the triumph of indomitable will power over adverse circumstances than is found in the life story of William, Prince of Orange, William the Third of England. Sick and weak, and ailing in body from his infancy, confronted by enemies immeasurably stronger than he, surrounded by so called friends who in truth were small-minded and jealous and delighted to thwart him ; again and again defeated in his great battles, he was indeed forced not once but

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over and over again to face his lion, Benaiah-like, in a pit in a time of snow. Yet from his adverse circumstances, this hero finally wrested not defeat but victory. Through painful years, years often black with disaster, he stood forth as the champion of the Protestant cause; he held in check the pride of Louis the Fourteenth of France, and ere he died, he saw his great enemy humbled and forced to sue for peace.

When does the cause of God, the cause of truth and righteousness, look prosperous? Yet the years as they roll away are made glorious by the triumph of right over wrong, by the record of lions of oppression, of greed, of cruelty, slain by earth's great ones in adverse circumstances, in pits, in time of snow. I think of our little army, oppressed, at first outnumbered, ill-supplied with ammunition. I think of the brave men holding their trenches bravely, valiantly; and I rejoice to know that heroism, valour, courage—these great manly qualities—have not gone out of fashion; and I look hopefully on to the glorious hour when victory shall crown our arms, when the heroes who are fighting our battles shall slay their lions though it may be in a pit in a time of snow.

But I look away from all human examples, away to an Example worthier and nobler far: I look away to Calvary, away to the Cross. I see there the world's great Burden-bearer, the world's great Advocate, who fought the most cruel combinations of adverse circumstances, who wrestled with the world's wickedness, who trod the winepress alone, who came forth from the mighty conflict crowned with glory and with majesty, who wrung from sorrow and loneliness and death, victory and a world's redemption.

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Up from the pit He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes ;  
He arose a victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign.  
Hallelujah ! Christ arose.

But what for you and me to-day is the practical outcome of all I have been trying to say ? Even this : If Benaiah away back in the early days of the world, unstrengthened by the glorious Gospel records, unenlightened by the example of Christ ; if Benaiah so valiantly did his duty in the face of fearful odds, how much more is expected of you and me with our Gospel privileges, with our New Testament knowledge ? Should not we be strong and very courageous ? Should not we also be Benaiahs, God-built men and women ready to

Breast the blows of circumstance,  
And grapple with our evil star ?

What enemies, what foes should daunt us as we follow Christ the great Example, who for us conquered not only death, but also all the subtle enemies of doubt and darkness and despair that can assail us in life ? We are all engaged in a hard and endless battle, but we fight, each common soldier of us, under the great Captain's eye. We can see Him only by the eye of faith, but He sees us, and is ever leading us upward and onward to victory. Commanded by Him, you and I shall assuredly slay our lions, though it be in adverse circumstances, though it may be in the midst of a pit in time of snow.

Therefore the last note I would strike to-day is one of courage and cheer. Do your duty, looking to Christ, and by His grace you shall master your circumstances howsoever adverse ; never shall they master you.



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The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by storm. The true conqueror is the man who never knows when he is beaten. Such a man is always, in sunshine or in sorrow, in the pit or on the mountain top, victorious. Let us endeavour, like Benaiah, nay, like a greater than he, like the Lord of glory Himself, to do our duty in defiance of difficulties, so shall we, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, attain the victory.

Not mine to choose my work or fate,  
Whether to die with hope elate,  
Or live the triumph to relate

    In after years.

Enough to battle in Thy name,  
For truth and right but not for fame,  
And ne'er Thy holy cause ashame  
    By coward fears.

And if it be my lot to fall  
Unnoticed and unknown of all,  
Named only in the great roll-call,  
    So let it be :

To know my post is all I ask,  
    And to serve Thee.

## XI

### The Yoke of Christ

“Take my yoke upon you.”—MATTHEW xi. 29.

THE opening chapters of St. Matthew's gospel are filled with brightness and sacred joy. All that the Evangelist has to tell us of the mission and ministry of the Saviour is hopeful. It is, so to speak, morning in lovely Galilee, and the sky is cloudless. But even as we have seen a sunny morning change unexpectedly and grow suddenly dark and thunderous, with storm clouds chasing each other swiftly across the sky, so was it in the earthly life of the Son of Man. Not long was the fickle sun of public favour to shine upon Him. Soon discouragements began to gather dark and heavy around Him. Soon it became plain that the events of the months were leading, not in a triumphant procession, but along a Via Dolorosa that was to have its earthly ending in a cross and a grave.

In the eleventh chapter of this Gospel, the heavy shadows begin to fall. The verses are a record of discouragements. Strange to relate, the first of these came, not from an enemy, not from a Scribe or Pharisee, but from John the Baptist himself, from John, strongest and bravest of men, from John the Master's great forerunner. Shut up in the narrowing walls of a prison, chill doubt crept in upon that lion-heart. “Art thou,” we

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hear him ask, " he that should come, or look we for another ? " The doubt of John set at rest, the Saviour is confronted in quick succession with the unreasonableness of the people and the unbelief of the cities ; and from lips that were wont to utter only things tender and sweet, strange new words begin to fall. Justice demands that wickedness shall be reproved, and we hear Him, the gracious Saviour, denounce those long-favoured yet unbelieving cities by the Lake : " Woe unto thee : woe unto thee ! " sighs the dolorous refrain. Woe to the unrepenting wicked, who so soon must perish !

But look at the great Son of God. See how He bears Himself under these repeated discouragements. You and I murmur and sigh and fret when the least breath of disfavour, of criticism, touches us. Not so the man Christ Jesus. In the midst of these disheartening circumstances, His words are words of thankfulness to His heavenly Father. With what awe and reverence we hear Him say : " I thank Thee, O Father."

And even as certain plants and herbs send out, when crushed, their sweetest perfumes ; even as some aromatic woods give out their richest odours only in the fire, so did the crushed, bleeding heart of the Saviour pour itself out under these fiery trials in the melody of a sweeter, more divine music. Matchless are the words wherewith this chapter ends, matchless and endeared to the hearts of countless generations of the sons of men : " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is

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light." Immortal, golden words, which the magic of genius has wedded to immortal, golden music.

To-day we are to consider one single phrase of these matchless words: "Take my yoke upon you."

In these words, the Christ of the ages appears under a new aspect. We are apt to think of Him as the world's great Burden-bearer, as the sinless One, who upon the Cross bore the weight of your transgression and mine.

O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head!  
Our load was laid on Thee  
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead,  
Bearing all ill for me:  
A victim led, Thy blood was shed;  
Now there's no load for me.

Yet here our Lord calls us to our part of the labour, calls us, as it were, to share His load with Him.

I wish to try to arrange my thoughts to-day under three heads:

- I. In every life there must be burden-bearing.
- II. We may bear a burden of our own making.
- III. We may obey the command of Christ, and take his yoke upon us.

First: In every life there must be burden bearing.

A recent writer has drawn attention to the fact that life is largely a matter of burden-bearing. No sooner can a child toddle than he begins to display a perfect passion for carrying things. He is happy when he is laden, delighted when his back is bending under the weight of his load. Look at him by the sea-side, busy with bucket and spade. How industriously he fills the

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bucket ; what joy it is to him to stagger with it to the castle he is rearing ! It is an instinct with him. He is as hungry for his load, his burden, as for his dinner. And with us, children of larger growth, it is just the same. We, too, seem to love to carry things. And can we not believe that this passion was implanted in us by God, that it is in truth a divine instinct ; because none of us, were he ever so selfish, can live altogether to himself, because in every life there must be burden-bearing ? As we look back to-day upon the long, long road humanity has travelled, we are awe-struck as we consider how handicapped man has been in the journey of life. What immense burdens he has been called upon to carry ! And our wonder is, not that his progress has been slow, but that, so weighted, he has been able to progress at all. Think of it. We are sent into this world as every Christian must believe, not to please ourselves, not to pile up possessions, not to be happy in the accepted sense of the word, but to grow our souls, to become, as the years roll on, liker and liker God. This is, or ought to be, our chief aim ; yet see how we are burdened ! See what brute passions, what fierce animal instincts hold us back ! We are weighted with besetting sins ; and, like the Apostle, we realise that, when we would do good evil is present with us.

We call these besetments, hindrances, do we ? Nay, we are wrong. It is in struggling with these hindrances, in climbing, climbing steadily onward in spite of the load ; it is thus that humanity has, so to speak, attained its manhood. It is thus it has steadily ascended the great world's altar stairs

That lead through darkness up to God.

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Long ago, in the infancy of the race, these fierce, brute instincts were necessary to protect mankind in its first hard struggle for mere existence, when the wild beasts wandered unrestrained, when "nature red in tooth and claw," was against it. Man needed these lower qualities then ; they were not a burden, but the motor power that carried him along, and without which he could hardly have survived. Now they are no longer necessary, these fierce brute instincts, and slowly, steadily mankind is dropping them, dropping them to take on another burden. For though I have just spoken of the dropping of burdens, I think you will agree with me that the more civilised we become, the more heavily are we burdened. Primeval man lived largely to himself. His hand was against every man, his responsibilities ended with his own rude dwelling, cave, tent, or wigwam, as the case might be. Not for a moment did he feel himself his brother's keeper. Of the solidarity of the race he had no conception.

Could you, for instance, imagine a nation in ancient days going to battle for the reason that involved Great Britain in the present great war ? Think of it. Our territory was not invaded ; our towns were not threatened. We are at war to-day to preserve not our safety, but something far more precious, our honour. We are bearing our Allies' burdens. We have taken upon our own shoulders part of the load of ill-used, brave Belgium. Will this load, taken up by us so generously, so ungrudgingly, be to us a hindrance in our upward natural progress ? Nay, but a help ; for weights borne bravely for others, by the working of a mysterious Divine law, cease to be weights, and become wings.

## The Yoke of Christ

But, I have said, in every life there must be burden-bearing. This is a necessity, a law of nature. The question arises of what nature shall the burden be ?

This brings us to our second thought.

II. We may bear a burden of our own making.

Every man must bear a burden, but that so many stagger under burdens, needless burdens of their own making, here lies the tragedy of life.

(a) Take the burden of worry.

God gives us our days to live through minute by minute. Never does He ask us to carry the burden of two days, two hours, two minutes even, at the same time. Yet this is the very thing we often strive to do. On the top of to-day's suffering, we pile to-morrow's possible pains, and the load accumulated by ourselves is unbearable. If only we could take Christ's simple plan ! If only we could cease being anxious for to-morrow, and quietly do our best to-day !

I ask you, you who are advancing in life ; what has your experience been ? Have you found your troubles so hard when you came right up to them, as they were in anticipation ? Did not they either vanish altogether, or did not sufficient strength come to you to carry you safely through ? Surely we should learn from experiences such as these, wisdom for future days. Surely we should ease our heavy-laden shoulders from the needless burden of worry. Surely we should live simply in the present, leaving the future to God, to whom alone it belongs. We make our own burden of worry, and a heavy, useless, needless burden it is.

(b) We make for ourselves also grievous burdens of sin. As we journey through life, you and I form



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many friendships ; we meet with many pleasant companions, whom it is a happiness to know. But after all it is with ourselves that Sunday and Saturday, day in and day out, we must keep company. We may weary of our friends and leave them ; never can we get away from ourselves.

And what is it that makes our own company burdensome to us ? It is sin. Have we lived below ourselves, have we consciously done wrong ? Then happy, contented, we cannot be. We bear the burden of sin, a burden of our own making, and its weight crushes us. Bunyan's picture of a man heavily weighted, unable to make swift progress by reason of his burden, is eternally, sadly true. It is sin that handicaps us in the race of life. It is sin that keeps us back. It is sin that makes us dread to open the window of memory and look back upon a black and ugly past. The burden of sin—ah ! who shall say how heavy it is ? and we can get rid of it only where Bunyan's Pilgrim lost his—only at the Cross.

We come now to our last thought.

III. We may obey the command of Christ and take His yoke upon us.

Strange, is it not ? the Saviour of men, humanity's great Burden-bearer, the Redeemer of the race, in one verse calls to Him the weary and heavy-laden, and promises them rest ; then in the very next verse, in our text, He bids them take on another burden : He says " Take My yoke upon you." How may we reconcile these two statements which seem to contradict each other ? Only in one way, only by the royal law of love. You are living in a heavy-laden world, therefore burdened you must be ; but come to

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Christ, take His yoke, and love—love to Him and to your fellowmen—will make it light. For the yoke, remember, is not intended to be a burden, but rather something to help us to bear our own burdens, and those of others.

Who are the happiest, most contented people you have met in the world? Are they those reared in the lap of luxury on whom fortune has ever seemed to smile, who appear to us utterly and entirely unburdened? Are such people in truth the happiest? By no means. There is a house-mother with worn fingers, with busy restless feet, harassed with a thousand daily cares; yet it may well be she has more of the herb called heart's-ease in her breast than they, because she toils late and early for her dear ones, because the heavy burden she bears is made light and easy by the yoke of love. You all know the story of the lad, who, when asked if the weight of the child he was carrying was not too heavy for him, at once replied, "Na, na, he is my brither." Here is another story told, with a glow of pardonable pride by Dr. Guthrie, of one of the ragged schools he established in Edinburgh. "I remember," he says, "going down the High Street early one morning, and seeing a number of our children coming up. One of them was borne on the shoulders of another and, on my asking the reason, he said the little fellow had burned his foot the night before, and he was carrying him to school. That," adds the doctor, "would not have happened in any other school in Edinburgh." The boy, ragged and unknown though he was, had learned life's great lesson. In carrying his companion, he had taken Christ's yoke upon him, and love, love for another, made that burden light.

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A great writer tells us how the most beautiful of her heroines became possessed of a little old book with certain passages marked by an unknown hand, long quiet in death, and that book : " The Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis spoke to her heart. Years afterwards, when the deep waters were passing over her soul, when love called to her ; but to satisfy its cravings would have meant to be untrue to her best instincts, to trample on the feelings of others ; then in her hour of utmost need the words marked by the unknown quiet hand came back to her memory. They are these : " I have received the Cross, I have received it from Thy hand ; I will bear it, and bear it till death, as Thou hast laid it upon me."

To each of us, as to lovely, large-souled Maggie Tulliver, Christ offers His Cross, His burden. He tells us to take it upon us, and in bearing it bravely, patiently, till death, we find our glory, our rest, our peace, aye, and our happiness too. Who ever bore such a burden as Christ, the great Master, Himself ; yet who so peaceful, so calm, so unruffled by trials, by change, by desertion, by persecution, by death itself, as He ? To-day He asks us to share His burden with Him, that, one day up in glory, we may share His Crown.

I am persuaded that as a nation we are to-day fulfilling the royal law according to the Scriptures : we are loving our neighbour nations as ourselves ; we are bearing their load, in so far as in us lies, for them. In thus doing we are, I am convinced, following in our poor unworthy measure, the example of Christ, who Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Let us, then, look up to God. Let us ask Him to grant us in His own good time true success. Let us strive to do our

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part cheerfully to bear our share of the national burden, assured that in so doing we shall be in truth taking upon us the yoke of Christ, the yoke that will ease our burden.

Thus praying, and thus working, not one of us shall miss the blessing, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

## XII

### An End To Sorrow

“ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

ISAIAH XXXV. 10. (R.V.)

It seems to be a law of nature that all things reach their moment of supreme beauty just before they fade and die. When the lovely rose has opened her petals to the full, displaying her glowing radiant fragrant heart, it is then that the first rough wind scatters her leaves on the ground, leaving behind no trace of the former glory. Never are the woods so gorgeous as when Autumn has laid her illuminating hand upon them, dressing them in colours of russet, of crimson, and of gold. We gaze in wonder at their glory ; but well we know that in a few more days or weeks at most, the branches of these same trees will be standing brown and bare against a wintry sky. Thus it is also with the sunset. It is the hour of “ day’s golden death ” that is most magnificent and most sublime : it is then that as we look away towards the western horizon we feel that we could almost fancy that the gates of the golden city, the new Jerusalem, were being opened before us.

I have read of a wonderful singer, whose liquid notes had a strange power to move and melt the

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hearts of men. One day, this singer sang as even she had never sung before. Her voice took on a new angelic quality: those who listened were enthralled; but no sooner was the song ended, no sooner had the divine voice sunk to silence than the singer fell back—dead. With her also, as with so many things in nature, the crowning hour, the true golden moment came just before the end. And it seems to me that it is even thus with the prophet Isaiah. If this thirty-fifth chapter is in truth, as so many critics think, the last in point of time of his prophecies, then I think you will agree with me that here he has excelled even himself. Tender and sweet and musical as are his foregoing chapters; can any of them compare in melody and majesty with this? Each verse is a jewel of the first water; each word fits into its place. We tremble to treat of utterances so sublime, lest we "should but dim them with our breath." We feel that here verily is inspiration at its highest. We feel that this man's eyes were in truth divinely opened, that he was made to see "things invisible to mortal sight."

It is good in these war times, these times when our hearts are so often heavy and sad: it is good now to ponder on passages such as these, passages that tell us of "the glad new time" that is coming, the time when the desert shall blossom as the rose, the time when we shall no longer say when we hear good tidings: "That is too good to be true." No, for then our radiant vision shall have become sober reality, then the mirage shall have become a pool.

The prophecy goes singing on in its melodious way till it culminates in the surpassing beauty of our text: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall

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return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

A great preacher, in dealing with this sweet swan song of Isaiah, calls his subject, " What life's journey may be." The title is suggestive. What life's journey is, we know full well. Too often we find it an aimless trackless wandering amongst desert sands. Seldom, alas ! do we soar to the sublime heights touched in our text. And oh ! the pity of it. Oh ! the pity that with souls capable as they are of aspiring to the highest things, we elect to be satisfied with the dust heaps of earth. Oh ! the pity of it that when we might reach to unknown heights of close communion with God, we are content to remain down amid the mists, down on the lower levels : content to live out our lives not as they might be—grand, majestic, free—but only according to the world's low sordid ideals. The prophet, in the verses that precede our text, has been describing a new wondrous highway, the way of holiness. He tells us of the safety and the peace and the beauty of it. Now his vision grows more far-reaching still. He sees the travellers upon this highway. Who are they, then, these travellers ? This is our first thought, this question, who are the travellers along this, the King's highway ?

### I. WHO ARE THE TRAVELLERS ALONG THE KING'S HIGHWAY ?

They are " the ransomed of the Lord " ; those who are no longer their own ; those who have been bought with a price, bought out of



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bondage into a new grand liberty, those who have been redeemed from slavery. Dear to the hearts of all men is liberty. In that wonderful book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Harriet Beecher Stowe tells us how Uncle Tom's owner, St. Clair, one day said to Tom that he intended to set him free, and the face of the slave glowed with delight. St. Clair was disappointed, surprised. He had been an easy generous master. "Why, Tom," he said, "are you so glad to leave me?" I have not the book at hand, and I forget the exact wording of Tom's reply; but it was something like this: "It's not that, Massa, it's the thought that I am a free man!" Those who are familiar with the book will remember that St. Clair, easy, good-natured, lazy it may be, failed to fulfil his promise to his faithful slave, and that it was only merciful death that set Uncle Tom free at last. The point I wish particularly to emphasise here is that liberty is dearer to the heart of humanity than aught else.

Isaiah, remember, was writing to a race of men who had just escaped being ground down in bitter bondage under the cruel heel of the Assyrians, and over whose heads the danger of a renewed invasion still hung heavy and black as a thunder-cloud. Too well they knew what to them the loss of national liberty would mean. Too, well they knew the bitterness of bondage. What vision could be dearer to their hearts than just this of a peaceful highway to be used by free travellers—"the ransomed of the Lord."

Are these words true of us? Do we come into the scope of the prophet's vision? Are we God's ransomed travellers, journeying on along His highway? Need I remind you of the

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price that was paid for our ransom ? Nothing less precious could purchase it than the blood of the Son of God. Well, truly, may the Apostle say : " Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Born into bondage, as we are by nature, born under the yoke of sin, it is Christ and Christ alone who can set us free. Strange paradox. It is only by entering upon a new bondage ; it is only by becoming slaves of Christ ; it is only thus that we can attain true and eternal freedom, freedom from sin, freedom from our own corrupt natures, freedom from anxious thought, freedom from fear of the future : in a word, liberty to walk serenely on along life's journey. This is the happy portion of the ransomed of the Lord.

We ask ourselves secondly : where are they going, these pilgrims along God's highway ?

### II. WHERE ARE THESE TRAVELLERS GOING ?

When you and I set out on a journey we have always some end in view, some point we hope to reach. Where are they bound for, these travellers in our text ? " The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion."

It is hard for us to realise how the loyal Israelite loved Jerusalem. It was to him the joy and pride of life, the centre of his religious hopes, the point around which all his devotion, his patriotism, rallied. " If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Away in exile, never could he forget the city of his love. He prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem. To rebuild her ruined walls was his dearest dream. Therefore Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem, is used in Scripture as a type of the golden city where Christ has gone before to prepare a place for

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His people, the city where the River of Life is flowing, the city where pain cannot enter, the city that rejoices in an endless day. And this is the city towards which the ransomed of the Lord are travelling. The King's highway leads on and on, up to its gates of gold.

Lift your eyes, you sons of light :  
Zion's city is in sight ;  
There our endless home shall be,  
There our Lord we soon shall see.

Dear as was Jerusalem to the heart of the Israelite, how infinitely dearer to the heart of the Christian is that heavenly city, that place of rest, that goal of all his hopes ! Be his present what it may, his future is flooded with golden light. His journey is not uncertain. It has a definite glorious aim. He is going to Zion, he knows it ; therefore he travels gladly on.

This brings us to our third thought. The King's highway is a highway of happiness.

### III. THE KING'S HIGHWAY, A HIGHWAY OF HAPPINESS

" The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."

Life in many of its aspects must be hard and stern. Constituted as we are with tingling nerves, with delicate susceptibilities, with endless possibilities of pain, suffering must often be our portion as we journey on through life. Yet, while this is so, while all must share the common lot of sorrow, I say to-day, with all the earnestness of conviction, the path of rectitude, God's highway, this and this alone is the path of true happiness. Men

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have tried other paths, paths of their own making, but, climbed they never so high, the result has been only failure and despair.

Once in the history of our land when parliament was making its great firm stand for liberty against the tyranny of the throne, there lived a man who was wonderfully gifted by nature. He was magnificently handsome ; he possessed a wonderful magnetic influence over the minds of men. At first he threw in his lot heartily on the side of justice and fair play : he fought nobly for his country and the rights of his fellowmen ; but alas ! he was not proof against temptation. The smiles of a court were too alluring for him. He proved a traitor to his party ; he perverted his noble gifts : in treachery and oppression he outdid even the servile, sordid men of his generation, till at last the country rose as one man and wrested his punishment from the unwilling hands of the king, till at last Wentworth—Lord Strafford—died on the scaffold, “ unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.” Contrast his career with that of his great contemporary Pym. Pym owed nothing to wealth or rank, but he possessed the true patent of nobility—a noble nature. He died as he had lived, poor and unrewarded. The one gift he received from the state was a tomb in Westminster Abbey ; but the cowards who came after him denied his honoured bones a quiet resting-place there. Such a man needed no monument ; in truth his monument is everywhere, in the hearts of men, in the quietness, the peace, the prosperity, the freedom, that we to-day enjoy in no small measure through the grand stand he made for liberty. And can we not believe that through his life’s long struggle Pym was gladdened and strengthened and

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held by divine forces outside of himself? Are we not persuaded that through his stormy career, when faced by danger, when threatened with death, his was the quiet happiness that comes from a sense of rectitude, the inner central peace that only true nobility of character can give?

Here we all are, poor pilgrims of eternity, travelling along a road that must often be monotonous and weary, yet the Lord does not wish our journey to be a mere plodding on, unrelieved by gleams of sunshine, ungladdened by the voice of song. Even as the devout Israelites on their way to keep the solemn feasts in the temple at Jerusalem were wont to relieve the tedium of the way by singing the songs of Zion, so should we Christians, as we fare forward, strive by our quiet gladness, by our peaceful rest of soul, to show to the world what a joyful thing it is to serve in the army of the Lord of heaven.

During these months that are so filled with alarms of war, how we honour the soldier who is bravely fighting for King and Country! How we applaud him, and how the sight of the uniform he wears thrills our hearts! Brethren, there is a greater army than even the brave army of Great Britain, an army wherein we all, men and women alike, may be soldiers, the army of Christ the Lord of glory. Fighting in His ranks all is well with us; we may indeed sing songs of praise, for victory is secure. With singing, then let us go on to Zion. It was written of one:

Her life was a life of singing  
While sorrowful years went by :  
The voice of that happy spirit  
Went up to its God on high.

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What then may life's journey be? This:—a thing of gladness; spite of failures, of trials, of perplexities, a thing of melody, even in the midst of the discords of earth. Through these heavy days, while wounds and death and pain are everywhere, try by God's grace to cultivate a quiet, cheerful spirit; so, believe me, will you, the non-combatants, serve your country well.

Finally, I ask you to notice the future of the ransomed of the Lord.

### IV. THE FUTURE OF THE RANSOMED OF THE LORD

“ They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Can you find anywhere a more rapturous promise than this? Sorrow and sighing done with for ever; the reign of eternal gladness and joy begun. These are days of sorrow and sighing, are they not? Through these long months, it seems to us that

Vainly hundreds, thousands bleed,  
Hundreds, thousands more succeed.

Think what this means. Think that every unit amongst those hundreds, those thousands, has his own set of quivering nerves, his own sensations, his own fears, his own death pangs. Think that scarcely one was so lonely and unhappy while on earth that he has not left behind him after his death, someone to mourn his loss. Think of all this; then lift your eyes to that heavenly land, the goal of our earthly pilgrimage, the place where all tears shall be dried, the place from whence sorrow and sighing, dark birds of the night, shall flee away. Our text, you see, covers the whole

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of life. We have past redemption, present contentment with God's will, future blessedness. Who would not choose to be a pilgrim along this highway, this highway that leads to bliss. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."



## XIII

### A Prisoner's Need of Comfort

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."—2 TIMOTHY iv. 13.

IN a certain picture gallery in Paris there hangs a beautiful and impressive picture. It is divided, as so many of the pictures one sees on the continent are, into two scenes or sections. Down below is a representation of earth: you see a seething mass of struggling, straining humanity; the faces are seamed with toil and care: all around are signs of stress and of agony. Human life is represented as strenuous, sunless, sorrowful. Then there are some clouds, and above the clouds we have the artist's idea of heaven. There calm and peace and joy reign supreme, and the throngs of the redeemed circle round the throne of One who is Himself the Light of that heavenly land.

It seems to me that that wonderful picture has its counterpart in the second epistle of Timothy. There also we have as it were two scenes. It also has its earthly and its heavenly side. Very real is the earthly side, and sordid enough are the details. Paul, the great Apostle, is now a prisoner. His missionary activities are over. No more at the call of God can he cross seas and continents to carry to countries new and strange the glorious news of the Gospel. His world has narrowed now

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to a Roman dungeon. He lies in loneliness and sorrow with a martyr's death in sight. He is only "Paul the aged," forgotten of the world. Such is the earthly side of the picture—sad and cheerless enough. But does the scene end here? Ah! no, there is another, a heavenly side here also. Is this lonely man, this prisoner, who is facing a painful death, discouraged, depressed, dismayed? Not one whit. For him

Stone walls do not a prison make  
Nor iron bars a cage.

Fettered though his body may be, his spirit is free, and that is soaring triumphantly up to God. As well might the Roman Emperor Nero strive to put in chains the great sun that morning by morning rises in his glory; as well might he try when the East is growing rosy with the dawn to hinder the golden day from flooding the world; as well might he try to do this as to imprison the soul of the man who in face of coming torture could calmly write: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. . . . Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Vain were Nero's bolts and bars, useless were the strong walls, the watching soldiers! Paul, the prisoner, was in truth the freest man in Rome, because he stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. Paul the aged, Paul the lonely, Paul the prisoner—here is one of the pictures painted for us in this epistle; but over that, bright, radiant, glorious, we have the other picture, the picture of Paul the ransomed of the Lord, Paul the fearless, Paul the heir to an incorruptible crown.

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To-day I have chosen a somewhat prosaicsounding text that we may try to gather some lessons therefrom: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."

In these directions to his dearly-beloved son Timothy, does not Paul teach us a lesson of prudence and foresight?

### I. A LESSON OF PRUDENCE AND FORESIGHT

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee."

When Paul wrote this letter the smiling Summer was warm and bright in the lovely land of Italy. Even into a stony dungeon no icy airs could enter. Even there the lonely prisoner must have caught something of the balmy glow that Spring brings to those favoured southern lands. Yes, but St. Paul did not live in the present only. He looked forward, and he knew that though it was Summer while he wrote, Winter in the nature of things could not be far off. He knew a day was coming, when, if he were still living, the frost and cold would surely come again; therefore, foreseeing in the sunny to-day a possible wintry to-morrow, he begs for his cloke that he may have something to wrap his aged limbs withal.

Now, let us learn from this a lesson of prudence, a lesson of foresight. I speak to the young. With you it is sunny Spring. All things are bright, smiling, joyful. This is right. Your Creator intended that you should enjoy to the full this glad opening period of your life. God does not grudge you your pleasures, your innocent delight in all things fresh and fair. It is He who gave you

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your enthusiasms, your beautiful young ardour. These are gifts most precious ; yet be warned in time. Even now in your life's Spring, now in the heyday of youth, learn a lesson from St. Paul's Summer entreaty for his cloke. Even as Summer in the earth cannot last always, but is followed inevitably by Winter—cold, dreary, sunless—so your pleasures, my young friends, cannot be lasting. One day—soon it may be—they will begin to pall upon you ; soon you will discover that they are only vanity and vexation of spirit. Youth, health, the fresh ardour of your start in life : you cannot keep these always. Enjoy them to the full while they are with you, yet look forward.

In your day of prosperity, do not forget to make preparation for the adversity that for every one of you the future must hold. Provide in Summer your Winter cloke.

Does someone quote to me the Sermon on the Mount, with its beautiful words : " Take no thought for the morrow ? " Ah, but thought there means care, worry, anxiety. To fret over to-morrow's possible pains, this is want of faith ; to, as far as in us lies, provide against them—this is only common prudence : this is to live along the lines of St. Paul, who in Summer asked for his Winter cloke. How different would it have been with us to-day, had our Government in years of peace looked before them, and provided for a to-morrow when war might be raging !

Well had it been for us, had the nation in its political Summer been provided with a winter cloke ! Lack of prudence, lack of foresight—this in a nation or in an individual must spell disaster.

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I have read of the aborigines of Australia that they are utterly devoid of all power of looking ahead. When the sun is shining they will throw away any poor shred of clothing they may possess. When the Winter cold is upon them, they will burn down even their own huts for the present warmth the fire will give them. They learn no lesson from nature ; from the bees that with wonderful God-implemented instinct store up, while the Summer flowers are blooming, sufficient honey to outlast the Winter's cold ; from the great mountains that in Winter pile up tons upon tons of snow, then in Summer, when all is dry and thirsty, send these snows down in cool, clear streams to water and refresh the thirsty land ; from the mosses that when the rain falls, saturate themselves like a sponge, and so remain damp and green through weeks of drought.

So let us to-day, all of us, young and old alike, learn from St. Paul's Summer call for his Winter cloke, a lesson of prudence. Let us in our days of prosperity lay up stores of gratitude, of faith, of patience, that we can draw upon when the troubles of life are actually upon us. Let us, like the wise virgins, have a store of oil laid in, that when the need arises, be it at the most untoward, unlikely hour, we may be able calmly, fearlessly, to meet the emergency.

I have read of a man who was quite unexpectedly told that in a few months more, so diseased were his eyes, his sight would be utterly gone. He was wealthy, and at once he gave up his business, he travelled to different places, he saw all the lovely sights he could, he as it were stored up beauty, that when his eyes were closed to all earthly things, he might remember these lovely sights,

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make mental pictures of them, and so refresh his soul. To you, I say to-day: lay up stores of fortitude, of love, of patience in your prosperous to-day, that in your hour of want you may not be a spiritual bankrupt, but may call upon them at need. And how can you lay them up? How but by drawing upon Christ? In Him are exhaustless stores of all your souls can need. Come to Him now while the Summer of your life is bright around you, then in His strength you will be able to face any future, howsoever tragic, with a brave firm heart.

He has, I say again, all things you need, and He has them in trust for you, has them that He may share them with His people. Learn to know Him now in the days of your prosperity, then when the storms of life are breaking over you, He will no more forsake you than He forsook St. Paul, His prisoner in Rome. Listen to the words of the great Apostle in this same chapter from which we have taken our text: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

Learn to know Christ in the Summer of your lives, then the storms and tempests of the most cruel Winter will be powerless to daunt or dismay your souls. "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee." St. Paul in Summer calls for his Winter cloke, thereby teaching us a lesson of prudence, of foresight.

But St. Paul asks for other things. He is lonely. He yearns for the clasp of Timothy's young hand; therefore he prays: "Do thy diligence to come to me before Winter." He

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knows what the creeping cold of a dungeon can be, therefore he wishes to be certain that before the frosts come on, he may have his cloke beside him. He longs for these things, yes, but there is something else he yearns for still more: "Bring," he says to Timothy, "the books, but especially the parchments!" "Bring yourself, bring my cloke, bring the books, but above all else do not forget to bring the parchments!" Paul teaches us here to put first things first.

### II. FIRST THINGS FIRST

How we long to pierce the veil of the past; how we hope that Timothy journeyed safely to Rome, and that he brought with him these parchments that Paul so longed for! I have lately read that when Paul's great translator, William Tyndale, was lying in a dungeon, waiting for the stroke that did in effect set his spirit free a few weeks later, he wrote to a friend: "Bring me a warmer cap, something to patch my leggings, a woollen shirt and above all my Hebrew Bible." See how these two great spirits, St. Paul and William Tyndale agree. They both ask for creature comforts, yes, but they put first things first. "Especially the parchments," writes one. "Above all, my Hebrew Bible," writes the other.

As life goes on there are so many things that we must let go. More and more nerveless grow our fingers, less and less firmly can we hold the things of time; but the great eternal verities, the sense of God's love and care, the faith that experience has taught, the strength of character which we have won in the long struggle with temptation: these things are our parchments: these are the first things which will still be ours when we are



## A Prisoner's Need of Comfort

past caring for a friend even so well-loved as St. Paul loved Timothy, when our bodies no longer need a cloke to cover them from the Winter's cold.

To-day, I say to you, put first things first. In a few more days our country will have been a year at war.\* You as a congregation have done your part nobly. You have sent some of your sons into the fighting line : you have given largely of your means ; you have sewed and knitted busily that our soldiers might not go unprovided with comforts. You here at home are now actually engaged in trench-building. You are making sandbags to help to ward off the bullets from our men. All this is good, and I am proud of you, and all you have done for our country and our cause ; yet I say to you : put first things first. As you work, do not forget to pray. Praying and working are inseparably united, and what God has joined let not man put asunder. The needles of the ladies will not be plied more slowly, if along with the stitches they weave in a prayer that God may bless and help our soldiers and our sailors, that He may be pleased speedily to bring this war to a close, and to bless us His people again with peace. Thus let us work, and thus let us pray, looking up ever in faith to Him in whose mighty hand are the issues of life and death.

I long, I long for the day to break  
When the sceptre of love shall rule ;  
When the toilers shall rest, and the sleepers wake,  
And the joy of each heart shall be full ;  
When the pillars of vice to their centre shake,  
And the joy of each heart shall be full.

\* 1st August, 1915.

## War and Immortality

I long, I long for the day to shine  
    When the sceptre of peace shall reign ;  
When battles shall cease, and feuds decline,  
    And the wounded be healed again ;  
When the pain of my brother be felt as mine,  
    And the wounded be healed again.

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I long, I long for the day to blaze  
    When Christ's sceptre of sacrifice  
Shall lift each soul from its selfish ways  
    To the joy of another's prize ;  
When the song of each be a hymn of praise,  
    To the joy of another's prize.

## XIV

### The Life-Giving Power of the River

“ And everything shall live whither the river cometh.”  
EZEKIEL xlvii. 9:

It seems to me that when we read the Word of God we are in danger of thinking of the different writers as mere passive instruments, men so Spirit-filled that the human was entirely merged in the Divine. In thinking this we greatly err. They were men, these sacred writers, men of like passions with ourselves, men with their human joys and sorrows, their human hopes and fears, aye and their human faults and failings : but they were men whose souls were so receptive that through them God could speak. It is in truth the intense humanity of the prophets and Apostles, not less than the divine sacred fire that burned within them, that makes their writings unique. Their words appeal to us ; because we feel that behind the divine inspiration, behind all mystic spiritual influences, there lived and felt and suffered a human soul whereon God could work ; that He, the great Potter, took the common clay whereof we are all made, and moulded it to these higher, heavenly uses. The question is one of receptiveness. They were responsive to the touch of God, these great ones of old, hence their unique usefulness, hence their mysterious God-given power to sway our souls.

## War and Immortality

Of all that I have been saying, the prophet Ezekiel is an outstanding example. Tender-hearted, loving, capable of warm human affections : all this we know he was. The brief history of his wife, the desire of his eyes, that history unsurpassed for pathos, proves how intensely human this man was. Then think of his own history ! Born in the days of the good Josiah, he witnessed the seeming rejuvenescence of the nation. High were the national hopes, till with the death of the warrior king on Megiddo's fatal field these bright golden hopes suddenly paled and died. Think of the young Ezekiel with all his budding prophetic ideals, with all his poetic fire, doomed to hear of expedient after expedient being tried and tried in vain, doomed at last to share in the final ruin, when he and his companions were carried captive to Babylon. Yet not forgotten of God was he, this lonely, well-nigh heart-broken man. For him the bitter bread of captivity was sweetened by the sustaining presence of the Unseen. As he sat and wept "by Babel's streams," by the river Chebar, probably a tributary of the Euphrates, he was granted a soul-refreshing vision of the river of God which is full of water, the great river of salvation, which is for ever widening and deepening as it flows. Ezekiel dreamed and mused amid his fellow-exiles in far away Babylon ; and as he mused the fire of God burned within his soul.

He was carried in vision back to well-loved desolate Jerusalem, to the Temple, no longer in ruins, but gloriously restored, and lo ! his riverless native city was riverless no longer. Right from the Temple of God there issued waters that swiftly, miraculously increased in volume till

## The Life-Giving Power of the River

soon there was no stream but a river that could not be passed over ; and Jerusalem's long felt want was abundantly supplied.

How our hearts follow this lonely man as his alien foreign surroundings fade away, as he is carried in thought back to his native city, as he sees in vision not the Jerusalem of his knowledge, but the Jerusalem of his hopes, as he looks upon the river that is now making glad the city of his love. But this vision of Ezekiel, beautiful though it is in itself, and encouraging though it must have been to the prophet and the men of his day, has also its lessons for you and me. Though centuries have rolled away since "by far Euphrates" Ezekiel sat and prophesied, yet the river that he saw in vision is still flowing full and free. This glorious river of salvation is still broadening and deepening as it flows.

Let us notice a few points about this river of the prophet's vision. First, its source.

### I. ITS SOURCE

It had its source in the Temple. It flowed out from God. In the Temple at Jerusalem there was one spot most sacred. It was called the "holy of holies" ; and there the high Priest alone entered, and he but once a year on the Great Day of Atonement. And from here, from the Sanctuary, from the very presence of God, issued this wonderful river of life. God is the source of all good. Every beautiful impulse, every generous prompting, every noble action that we are enabled to do : all these have their inspiration, like Ezekiel's river, in the holy place ; all these divine influences flow from God.

## War and Immortality

Beautiful is it to trace in Scripture how much sacred symbolism centres round a river. From the book of Genesis right on to the last chapter of Revelation, you can hear the ripple of its life-giving waters. "It went out from the garden, and parted into four heads." Again: "Thou makest them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." "He that believeth on Me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Turn where you will in the word of God, you can never get far away from the river, the glorious river of salvation, which has its source in God.

It is hard for us, living as we do in a land where we are at times tempted to think there is a superabundance of rain: it is hard to realise all of blessing and health and life, dwellers in drier climes owe to their rivers. When Isaiah, writing to the Israelites, said that *there*, there in riverless Jerusalem "the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams," he made use of a metaphor sure to appeal to the hearts of his hearers. The river issued from the altar in the Temple. The vision carries us away back, back into the councils of eternity. There we hear one say: "Deliver from going down into the pit. I have found a Ransom." The vision carries us away over into the New Testament, away to the hill called Calvary, away to the Cross. There is the holy place, the holy of holies, whence issues the river of salvation. What Ezekiel saw darkly in a vision, that you and I see in clear New Testament light. We know that it is Christ Himself

## The Life-Giving Power of the River

the Water of Life, who is the source of the great river of salvation that gladdens the earth. It issues from the altar, from the Cross, from our Saviour's sacrifice.

We pass on to notice secondly : this river is for ever broadening and deepening as it flows onward.

### II. THE RIVER BROADENS AND DEEPENS AS IT FLOWS

Times and again were the mystic waters of the prophet's vision measured. At first they were shallow, to the ankles ; a little while and they were deeper, to the knee ; anon they reached the loins : once more they were measured, and lo ! " the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."

Have you ever stood by the source of a great river ? Have you seen it issue, a mere thread of water from the lonely hillside ? It may be that at first you only guessed its presence by the greener verdure of the grass that told of the moisture below. Could you guess, judging by its source, of the wealth of water that same river was yet to carry down to the sea ?

Suppose you or I had been living in Jerusalem centuries ago ; suppose we had seen the Sufferer on that central Cross, suppose we had looked in vain for any of His disciples, suppose we had witnessed that great lonely sacrifice ; could we then, think you, have guessed that from that Cross was to issue a river of salvation vast enough to fill the world ? How small in its beginnings was the Christian Church ! A few faithful, though fearful, men and women ; none of them learned as we count learning ; none of them great or influential. That was the



## War and Immortality

beginning of the Church of Christ: look at it to-day! Think of the millions who now call Christ Master and Lord.

Verily this great river of salvation has with the centuries broadened and deepened in its flow. There may indeed have been times of local and apparent retrogression, but these were eddies merely. Ever and always the great sweep of the river has been onwards and outwards, as missionary enterprise has prospered more and more, as countries new and strange are being led to the feet of Him who died on the Cross, as a propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

That nothing, no possible disaster, no war, howsoever grim, nothing in earth or hell, can stop the onward, all-conquering rushing of the mighty river—here is our comfort, here is our hope.

As we hear of wars and rumours of wars, of great fortresses falling, of successful air raids, if we count the slaughter of innocent women and children success; as we read of such things let us remember that through all "God's in His heaven—all's right with the world," that the great wide river of God's mercy is still flowing as of old, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Let us notice in the third place, the river of the prophet's vision was life-giving.

### III. THE RIVER IS LIFE-GIVING

"Everything shall live whither the river cometh."

The waters seemed to Ezekiel's eye to bring life with them. Shoals of fish appeared; on the banks of the river grew trees whose leaves were

## The Life-Giving Power of the River

fadelessly green, whose fruit was good for food. Life, strength, healing : all these good gifts did this wonderful river bring.

Christianity is the most active, energetic, life-giving force that the world has ever known. To country after country this great river has flowed and always the result has been the same, always it has found men besotted, bestial, dead : always it has raised them up to newness of life. Trace the course of this river of salvation, and you will find along its banks, health, beauty, fragrance, true life. It goes to the worst places, this great river, and does its healing life-giving work. Amongst tribes the most degraded, where the men were fierce cannibals, where there was naught but horrid cruelty, there the waters have done their healing work, there to-day we find security and peace.

Out in the fighting line, right under the big guns, there its waters flow, and by its banks there appear, even in the grim battlefield, the sweet flowers and fruits of love and self-sacrifice. As the prophet was granted this vision, the desert stretched right before his eyes. He saw in imagination the miry places, the dreary stretches of sandy barren land, leading down to the Dead Sea. He saw the sand whirling in clouds, beating up and choking everything : he saw this thirsty wilderness ; then, oh, blessed vision ! he saw the river.

To us, often, life must be a desert, drear, shelterless, waterless ; but then the Lord has pledged His royal word to be to His people " rivers of water in a dry place." This is poetry ; what is the prose fact underlying the words ? This : you and I when the troubles of life are actually

## War and Immortality

upon us, when they come "not single spies, but in battalions," when our world seems sinking to ruin all around us, you and I have then in our hearts a secret source of comfort whereof the world knows nothing; even there, to that dry place, that desert of the soul, God's beautiful river comes, and is refreshing, life-giving, sweet.

When Sir Philip Sidney lay dying on the battlefield, one brought him a cup of water, but he saw another wounded soldier looking longingly at him, and he said: "Give him the water, his need is greater than mine." It was a noble, a self-sacrificing act, and worthy of a brave soldier. But the glory of this river of salvation lies just here, that the supply can never run out. It is always abundant, always sufficient for the needs of the world. Millions have come to drink of its water, have there found life, yet the river is fuller to-day than ever it was in the history of the world, and to-morrow it will be fuller still.

Blest river of Salvation !  
Pursue thine onward way ;  
Flow thou to every nation,  
Nor in thy richness stay—  
Stay not till all the lowly  
Triumphant reach their home ;  
Stay not till all the holy  
Proclaim " The Lord is come."

Let me ask you: has this river of salvation which has been flowing so abundantly been a river of salvation to you? Have you drunk at its stream, and has the thirst of your soul been satisfied?

"In the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when outwardly all seemed full of gladness, Christ seeing that the heart was still sad and famished, cried: 'If any man thirst,

## The Life-Giving Power of the River

let him come unto Me and drink.' He is the fountain of living waters.'" He can satisfy the soul's deepest need ; therefore He exhorts you to stoop down and drink and live.

" And as we now drink of the river which makes glad the city of God, we shall be preparing for that time when ' the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us and lead us unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.' "

## XV

### Eternity in the Heart

“ Also he hath set the world in their heart.”

ECCLESIASTES iii. 11.

SOME of you may remember that on a former occasion I took for my text the words immediately preceding our subject for to-day, namely the phrase: “ He hath made everything beautiful in its time.” So lovely are the visions that a sentence such as this calls up that it is hard to turn our eyes away from the pictures which it paints. We seem to see the first green glory of the Spring, the bursting of the tender buds, the golden glory of the daffodils; then as the year grows older, we behold a wealth of pink and crimson roses, sunsets tinged with purple and gold, the ineffable mysterious beauty of midsummer nights. Anon the vision changes. Autumn is at hand. The corn is yellowing on the hillsides, the bracken browning in the woods. Still there is beauty, still there is loveliness; loveliness, too, when “ Winter reigneth o’er the land,” when the world is wrapped in the purity of a mantle of virgin snow. “ He hath made everything beautiful in its time.” As we read the words we see “ the baby new to earth and sky,” lovely, innocent, smiling, unconscious of sin or of care; we see the youth in the fresh bright vigour of his manly strength; we see the old man with his silver hair—each and

## Eternity in the Heart

all beautiful with the beauty of timeliness. We see the young Christian in the first ardour of the start along the upward way; we see the ripe tried believer who has long borne the burden and heat of the day, who has proved by blessed experience that He who is "able to save" is also "able to keep." We stand by the deathbed of the Christian, and we rejoice that even this, the last enemy, has been destroyed, that for him who is trusting Christ, death too is in its time "beautiful." Verily, there is scope here not for one, but for twenty sermons.

But, to-day, I pass this sentence attractive though it is, I pass on to the next phrase in the verse, the words: "Also He," that is God, "hath set the world in their hearts."

Our theme for this morning is the majesty, the dignity, the greatness of your soul and mine. The word which in our Authorised Version has been rendered "world," may more fitly be rendered "eternity." "Also He hath set eternity in their heart." It is my purpose to-day to speak to you from these two readings, and to try what we can learn from each. First, "He hath set the world in their heart."

### I. THE WORLD IN THE HEART

A preacher in the Antipodes tells us how once as the train in which he was travelling was rushing through a wild part of Australia, a boy came to the side of the track, and cried wistfully: "Paper! Paper! Paper!" The travellers in the train heard his cry, and from the windows of the carriages paper after paper was thrown. The boy gathered them up, and ran off happily, carrying with him the news of the world. What

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instinct is it in us that makes us so long for the morning paper, makes us long to know what men are doing in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America? The lower animals do not share this longing. Your horse, patient beast of burden, has no instinct for his equine species over the world, knows not, cares not how horses are treated in other lands, wots not how far the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has spread its influence. Even your dog, chosen companion of man, intelligent though he is, even your dog takes but a passing interest in his kind. He meets another dog, they investigate each other, there may be some growling, perhaps even a fight; then your dog returns to your side satisfied to remain with you, uninterested further in his species. But with man, "the roof and crown of things," with man it is different. To him his fellowmen are for ever interesting. He must know everything about his brothers. As he advances in civilisation this desire increases. He cannot be happy apart from his fellows. He simply wants to know "everything about everybody," and why? Because the Lord who made him, has endowed him with a wide far-reaching outlook, because the Lord has put the world in his heart.

I have been reading a book of Arctic travel, the story of how a certain man set out with a few chosen companions to find the North Pole. And on his deathbed this hero said: "It is not only the getting there; the search is worth all it costs." There it is: there is the explanation of all the great ventures of humanity, the almost super-human endurance of explorers, the heroic onward march of conquerors. The world was in their



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heart. No narrow bonds could long confine them. Their desires were infinite ; their thoughts encircled the globe. The comfort, the security, the peace of home—these things appealed not to them. Their longings stretched out away beyond the horizon, away to the utmost verge of the world. " He hath set the world in their heart." Ah, yes, and when that majestic noble thing, the human heart, is turned to God, then indeed there is found a power for good beyond our utmost thought. Verily the world was in Carey's heart, when he set out single-handed to begin the great task of Christianising India, when the missionary spirit so moved him that he could not sit still and allow God to convert the world. Missionaries, philanthropists, district visitors, every man and woman who is working in any way, however small, to ennoble and uplift the race: all these have the world in their heart. God has placed in their souls a kindness, a love, a yearning toward their brother men which can be satisfied only in working for the welfare of those whom they know.

Am I straining the text, if I say to you that the world was also in the heart of God, God in whose image you and I are made? We know that there do exist many other worlds, greater, and for aught we can tell lovelier than this ; but it is of this world, and this world only that we find it written, " God so loved the world." Not " God so loved Israel, England, Europe." No. " God so loved the world!" The words give us a glimpse into the great infinite heart. The world with its sin ; yet God loves it. You and I conscious of our unworthiness, our shortcomings ; yet God loves us. And it is because the world was first in the tender pitying heart of God, that

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He has also set the world in the heart of every man and woman that He has made. In every one of us dwells the possibility of being large-minded, unselfish, looking not on our own things, but every man also on the things of others. We are interested in our fellowmen the wide world over. In this sense the "world" is in every heart. To be interested in our fellowmen, and to long to serve them, this is to live the Christ-like life, this is in the highest sense to have the world in our heart.

As we think of the world to-day war-tossed, men vieing with each other how many they can kill on land, on sea and in the air, oh, with what infinite pity must the God of love look down upon this world that He has made, and that He has in His heart !

And yet, even here, even in the grim battlefield ; can we not see beauty, self-sacrifice ? Are there not many amongst our brave soldiers, our sailors, who have the world in their heart ? Was not this true of the brave man who returned to the ill-fated *Arabic*, who risked his life that he might save a baby ? As we read the history of this war, of its brave deeds, of its heroes, are we not again and again reminded that man was at first made in the image of God who had the world in His mighty heart of love, and that image howsoever blurred, is never wholly effaced ? " Also He hath set the world in their heart "—your heart and mine. Hence every unselfish impulse, hence every deed of self-sacrifice that has brightened and ennobled this earth whereon we live, come.

We pass on to the second reading of our text : " Also He hath set eternity in their heart."

# Eternity in the Heart

## II. ETERNITY IN THE HEART

The writer of this book of Ecclesiastes has been giving us a list of all the changes from prosperity to adversity for which there is scope even in the short term of our human life. He tells us how there is a season for everything, and how all changes are beautiful in their season; then suddenly he seems to contrast time with eternity. "Also," he says, "He hath set eternity in their heart." What means the phrase if we take it in this sense? This: you and I are placed here in a world which, though beautiful, is ever changing, where nothing is permanent, where nothing lasts. Yet here, here in the midst of this fleeting thing called time, our Maker has put eternity in your heart and mine.

What a wonderful conception is here! What grandeur, what majesty does this thought give to life! While we live in the transient, our hearts have longings for the eternal. Our bodies dwell in time; our souls may soar up to eternity. In all tribes, even the lowest and most degraded, there is implanted some religious instinct, some yearning that feels after God. The great universal heart of humanity is so constituted that not all the pleasures of time and sense can satisfy it. It is too vast, too infinite, to find any abiding rest here below.

Over earth's sweetest joys it writes at last, "Vanity and vexation of spirit." Think of it. Here we are poor mortals, born in a changing, restless world, so many years more or less given us to live, a little spoonful as it were of time served out to us; then we disappear from the earth, and the place that knew us once knows us no more again for ever.

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That is one side of the picture, but one side only. Our bodies are mortal, not so our souls. Our bodies live in time, our souls are anchored in eternity. We have eternity in our heart, a sense of our immortality, the consciousness that the great change we call death is not an ending, but rather a beginning, a beginning of the new life that is unending. I question if there lives a man who in his innermost heart fails to believe in the immortality of the soul. In every heart there is placed this wonderful mysterious something, this instinct which in our text is called "eternity," which tells us that the real vital part of us is as undying as God Himself, which bears witness to the unending life of the spirit. He hath set eternity in every heart ; therefore it is that the things of time so soon lose their savour ; therefore it is that sinful pleasures become as husks that swine might eat ; therefore it is that nothing here below, nothing but God, can satisfy the immortal soul. Can you fail to see the dignity this thought lends to life ? Here we are, busy from morning till night with trifles of one kind and another. Day after day, week after week, year after year, "the trivial round, the common task," calls us ; yet all the while we have within us the germ of that wonderful thing called eternity, that thing whereof we scarce can grasp the magnitude.

Other creatures are altogether immersed in time ; we, made in God's image, have yearnings, longings towards eternity, yearnings, longings that are God-implanted and that are witness-bearers to our immortality. How sublime is the thought that God hath set eternity in the heart of every man and woman to whom I speak to-day ! Not

## Eternity in the Heart

only will you live for ever, but also in your present life you are feeling after the infinite. The troubled sea that cannot rest—this is the image of your soul till it finds rest in God. Though you may not know it, the tendrils of your heart are for ever feeling after some support, something strong, permanent, whereon to cling.

Like the poor prodigal of old, fain would we live upon the husks of earth, but in them, alas ! we find no nutriment, nothing whereon our souls can sustain themselves. O restless, weary souls ! there is for you a possibility of satisfaction. You find it where the prodigal found it when he said : “ I will arise and go to my father.” The writer of Ecclesiastes learned even in his day that it was possible to satisfy the hunger of the soul, that there was a cure even for vanity and vexation of spirit. Out of his bewilderment, through the winding ways of his life, he comes at last to a wise and right ending. The conclusion of the whole matter is : “ Fear God, and keep His commandments.” So wrote this tried, stormed-tossed soul in Old Testament times. But we have a further word from God. Christ the Saviour, Christ who died for our sins, Christ speaks to us, not of fear, not of commandment-keeping, not of the whole duty of man. His word for you and me to-day is : “ Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Take Him at His word. Bring Him your heart, wherein He Himself has placed the germ of eternity. Learn to know, to love Him here in time ; then when for you time is changed for eternity, He, your Saviour, and your friend, will Himself receive you to glory. “ Also He hath set eternity in their heart.”

# War and Immortality

Father, my heart has never found  
Its perfect goal below ;  
It beats in vain upon the ground  
Against the cold and snow ;  
It has no chance to reach its home  
Save in a kingdom yet to come.

All other things beneath the sky  
Receive their kingdom here ;  
There is a splendour for the eye,  
A music for the ear :  
But my heart's cry for perfect love  
Waits to be heard in heaven above.

Sure as the eye demands its beam,  
 Sure as the ear its voice,  
 So surely on thy path shall gleam  
 The freedom of thy choice ;  
 And thou to whom earth was not given  
 Shalt meet thy counterpart in heaven.

## XVI

### In Another's Place—The Difference It Makes

"I also could speak as ye do : If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you."—JOB xvi. 4.

IN the book of Job we are faced with an old, old problem, a problem which, spite of the countless books and sermons that have been written upon it, is a problem still, and seems likely to remain so for ever, the problem of innocent, unmerited, seemingly useless suffering. Why the child in the bright promise of his youth is suddenly called away from his mother's arms of love ; why the strong man working to maintain his family in honesty and independence is smitten with a wasting disease that leaves him a useless invalid for the rest of his days ; why the well-earned, well-spent wealth of a good man suddenly makes wings for itself and flies away ; why an untimely frost falls upon the land, and in a single night the crops whereon the farmer has spent toil and care lie black and blighted ? These are questions no man, howsoever wise, can answer. Over them we can only write in humble faith : " What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And Job, who lived in the misty beginning of time, Job is for us a classic of an upright man, who suffered almost unheard of calamities, who lived



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triumphantly through his troubles, who came out safely reaching the calm and the brightness which always lie on the other side of unmerited disaster. To say Job's sorrows were sent to him by the Evil One, this is no answer to the problem. Contrary to the will of God, Satan was powerless to hurt this man. Not one of his sons or daughters could die ; not one of his cattle could be plague-stricken ; not one hair of his head could fall without the express permission of Jehovah. Here is the bitterest drop in our cup of suffering, the thought that God allows all this ; that this sorrow whereof we know not the reason comes from Him. It is only through experience, experience, ah, how dearly bought, that you and I learn life's great lesson, the lesson that no possible combination of calamities can take from us aught that is truly worth the having, the lesson that through all life's sorrowful happenings God's grace is sufficient for us, that in our weakness His strength is perfected.

Job had three friends who came, we read, to comfort him. They said one to another: " Job is in trouble," and they made an appointment to visit him together. At first their conduct was altogether admirable, and we may learn precious lessons from it. Here is what they did: they wept with him. They sat down on the ground beside him. For seven days and nights they said not a word, because they saw his grief was great. Up to this point, their conduct was, I consider, perfection. They gave to this lonely stricken man the sweet sense of human companionship. They did not worry him with words. They allowed their silent sympathy to do its work. Shakespeare tells us it is " the grief that does not

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“speak, that whispers the o’er-fraught heart and bids it break.” After the seven days, at last Job breaks the silence. Like a hurricane are his words. Call this man patient ! Why, he invokes heaven and earth to witness his sorrows ; he even dares from the midst of his sack-cloth and ashes to argue with the Almighty. Horrified at his words, his friends call him to account. They speak much, therefore of course they speak foolishly. Their words are like a hot iron on a raw sore. So ill then did they perform the office they professed to perform, that the term, “Job’s Comforters,” has passed into a proverb. And right soundly Job answered them. Verily in argument he is more than a match—this suffering God-smitten man—for them one and all. In our text he puts his case most forcibly. “I also could speak as ye do : If your soul was in my soul’s stead, I could heap up words against you.” It is as though he said : “This is fine talking, but what are words ? I am the sufferer. Were your soul in anguish as mine is, words would not be wanting to me also.” To-night we shall together consider this single phrase : “Were your soul in my soul’s stead.”

### THE NEED OF SYMPATHY

Why, think you, did these three friends of Job who began their comforting office so well ; why did they so signally fail at the last ? Well, I consider they lacked adaptability, sympathy, that mysterious subtle power, possessed by some elect souls, of putting themselves in the place of those they fain would comfort. They know—these favoured few—as Job’s comforters did not, they know—precious beautiful gift—when to be

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silent ; they know also when to speak, and just the fitting words to use. And this knowledge they owe to their power to put themselves in the place of others. When the prophet Ezekiel was chosen of God to deliver divine messages to the men of his generation and to the world, for that special work he needed special preparation. Not enough was it that his heart glowed with poetical fire ; not enough that his soul was feeling for ever after higher things ; not enough even that God should speak through him.

No, if he were to speak home to the heart of the men of his generation and of the world, he must learn the great art of sympathy. And how did he learn it? How? but by putting himself in the place of his fellow exiles, by sitting where they sat for seven days, by entering into every detail of their sordid commonplace daily life, by coming to understand, through close companionship with them, what were their sorrows and what their joys. Thus and thus only was the young Ezekiel fitted to translate to his fellowmen the voice of God. Would you be, like Barnabas, a son of consolation ; would you wish to carry comfort to hearts around you that are so heavy and sad ? You can do it by striving to put your soul into the stead of others, by picturing their circumstances, by trying to put yourselves in their place.

Years ago, a book was written called " All Sorts and Conditions of Men," which made a great stir in its day. It was the story of a young girl who renounced the station of life in which she was born, who went to live in the east end of London, who literally put her soul in the stead of her hard-worked, poverty-stricken sister women, who " sat where they sat," who put herself in their

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place. The book goes on to tell us the good she did; how those in sorrow came to her for sympathy, how her poor bare little room became a green and palm-shaded Elim in the dreary Marah of east London. The book itself, even the reading of that great sacrifice, did incalculable good; for through its influence there was reared in that part of London a "People's Palace," a place where weary toil-worn men and women could find rest and enjoyment. "If your soul were in my soul's stead," wailed Job to his so-called comforters, say rather his tormentors.

How often have we felt the same! How human this man is in his sorrow! Let us strive to understand others, to feel their pains, to put ourselves in their place, thus shall we learn the beautiful divine art of sympathy, thus shall we learn to comfort others. But to put ourselves in the stead of others also makes us large-minded, forgiving, merciful. When we read in our daily papers the record of the more glaring sins and shortcomings of our fellowmen, how superior we are apt to feel, how prone to judge these guilty ones! Alas! ought we not rather to pity them? What know we how they were tempted, what inherited tendencies they had to fight against, what extenuating circumstances existed? Had we been in their place, handicapped as they were, would we have done any better? Might not our conduct have been infinitely worse? Considerations such as these tend to make us

Gently scan our brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman. Yes,

What's done we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted.

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I think it is Charles Reade who is the writer of a book called, "Put Yourself in His Place." The hero of this story is for ever asking himself what he would do if he were put in the place of others, and this mental attitude makes him magnanimous.

### GOD'S JUDGMENT AND MAN'S

Let us as we go through this world, this world wherein we have a part to play for such a short uncertain period; let us be generous, forgiving, merciful. Let us refrain from judging others. It is God alone who sees all things; therefore to Him alone judgment of right belongs. Job's three friends judged by external facts alone. Job was greatly afflicted; therefore, argued they, Job must have sinned. We are like Bildad the Shuhite, and the rest, in that in us the judging spirit too often exists. The more we strive to put our soul in the place of others, the less likely will we be to judge them, the more largely will we forgive them. As to-day we put ourselves in the place of our Allies, how we pity them: the Belgians without a country, the French with their land invaded, their fertile soil turned into a sepulchre, fair tracks of country ruined and desolate; the Serbians suffering from a terrible disease, the Russians experiencing dire losses, forced, brave though they are, to retreat before superior forces.\* We think of our own sailors keeping watch upon the lonely deep; of our soldiers gallantly holding their line of trench. We think of all these things and our hearts swell with infinite pity. We long to help these brave men; our hearts go up in prayer that God may keep them in His safe keeping, may watch over

\* August 29th, 1915, before the tide of war had turned in favour of Russia.

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them, may in the end send them victory. "If your soul were in my soul's stead."

Do not these words carry us, as does every possible theme, over to the New Testament, over to Bethlehem, to Calvary? Do they not picture for us one—our Saviour—who verily put His soul in your soul's stead and mine, who left His home of glory, who, like Ezekiel, "sat where we sat," that He might know us altogether, that He might be indeed qualified to pity and to save us? It is because "in every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows had a part!"; it is for this reason that Christ is to you and me the perfect Saviour that He is. What sorrow, what temptation, what disappointment are we called upon to pass through that He has not been there before us? All along the vale of tears we trace His footsteps. He is for ever leading us on, out of the darkness into the light.

We know how in the end Job was vindicated; how more than he had lost was restored to him. It is ever thus with those who follow Christ. Perplexed, sorrowful, they may be often, but deserted, forsaken of God? *Never!* One day, if not here, then assuredly in a golden hereafter, their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, and their judgment as the noonday. For, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Learn, O my soul, to use  
Experience thou hast got,  
Nor any thread to lose  
God wove into thy lot,  
Nor yet to pick and choose  
What pleaseth thee or not.

. . . . .

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No lesson, then, refuse,  
Which love to thee hath given ;  
If here it find no use  
Thou'lt find it yet in heaven ;  
God's teaching does not lose,  
Hid in the heart like leaven



## XVII

### Dying in Faith

“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—HEBREWS xi. 13.

THERE was never, I suppose, a time in our national history when courage, with all its kindred manlike qualities, was more esteemed amongst us than it is to-day. During the past week I read a letter from a friend who is nursing our wounded soldiers in France; and as she wrote in glowing words of their patience, their bravery under the tortures they suffered, their gratitude for the smallest favours, my heart was thrilled with pride, and I felt that in hands such as these the destinies of our well-loved country were indeed safe. We love a hero; we crowd to see the fortunate winner of the Victoria Cross; we feel that bravery is the quality that is beyond all others most worthy of a man and a soldier. And here in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews we have a glory-roll of heroes. This is a great picture gallery where portrait after portrait appears before us painted in colours that time is powerless to dim.

Here they all are: Abraham, earliest type of the true gentleman; Moses, statesman and law-giver. Before us they pass in stately, silent procession, speaking to us from out of the depths

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of the still, mysterious past, calling upon us, their spiritual children, to be worthy of our glorious ancestry. Verily not dead are they—these heroes of a bygone time, not dead, but immortalised ; for while the qualities of endurance, of courage, of faithfulness to duty, are prized amongst us, so long will their names be written in letters of gold upon our hearts.

We read, I think, the words of our text with a certain measure of surprise : “ These all,” says the sacred writer, “ these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

### I. LET US ASK OURSELVES FIRST : WHAT MEAN THESE WORDS IN THE LIGHT OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY ?

Take for instance the life story of Abraham. Here he is in Ur of the Chaldees, living a happy, contented, and, I doubt not, blameless life.

Suddenly to him comes the call of God. Just how the call came we know not, nor does it avail us much to enquire. Enough that the man was satisfied that to his heart the Lord had spoken. He is to travel when travelling was unusual and dangerous ; he is to leave the well-known tents and fields of his childhood ; he is to fare forth on an untrodden path with the Lord alone for Guide and Pioneer. But with the command is linked a promise of unexampled grandeur. He, Abraham, is not to be always lonely, insignificant. The Lord will make of him a great nation, will give him Canaan for his own. And Abraham

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“ staggered not at the promise through unbelief.” He trusted God. He started on his toilsome journey, and into the land of Canaan he came. He is in a fair way now, you say, to realise the greatness promised him by God? Alas! not so. Disasters fell upon him; he was met by a famine. Time after time his hopes were blighted; he died at last possessed in Canaan of only the grave wherein he buried Sarai, and even that grave he bought and paid for. Had the Lord then been unfaithful to His promise? Had the covenant-keeping God forgotten Abraham? Nay, the promise unfulfilled in the letter was abundantly fulfilled in the spirit. If Canaan in a material sense was not Abraham’s, yet its beauty, its trellised vines, its soft hillsides, its deep, dewy dells—all these were his to enjoy. He was in truth possessor of the country in a way that its rude heathen inhabitants never could be. Step by step the Lord led Abraham. Though He did not give him territory He gave him Himself; and the greater included the less. Possessing God, Abraham verily possessed all things. Thus he, this great man, this pioneer of our race, died in faith, not having indeed received that which was promised to him; but led on through the hope of the merely temporal to look at last to no earthly Canaan, though flowing, never so abundantly, with milk and honey; but rather towards a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Think you Abraham reckoned his life a failure, because Canaan, the earthly Canaan, was not his? Think you he regretted the hour when at the call of God he said goodbye to country and kindred? Ah, no. Long ere the man’s feet ceased to tread the dusty ways of earth he had the earnest of

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heaven within his soul. "Afar off" he saw the realisation of the promise of God. He embraced it. He was persuaded of it. He knew that though on earth he was doomed to be ever a pilgrim and a stranger; yet the city that hath foundations would assuredly be his at last. Led on gently by God from the lower to the higher he stands for us a type of faith, a type of the blessed spirit who, not having seen, can yet believe.

Not long ago we noticed together how this very same principle worked out in the life story of Moses. A son of Abraham, he was heir with him of the same promise. Place his history over against the words of our text, and see how beautifully it fits in. Moses was reared in a palace; but stronger than the love of luxury, stronger than the lust of power, was the call of his Hebrew blood. His heart was not in the palace. It was with his oppressed, down-trodden countrymen. To be under God their deliverer: this was his great life work. And the untold sorrows he endured! He faced forty long years of murmuring, of discontent. Not only had he to lead his people, he had also somehow to check their complaining, somehow to provide for them. He had, when their sins were most glaring, to plead for them before the throne of a justly offended God. For forty years! We say the words calmly; but think of all the weary hours and days these years included. Think how often the heart of the man must well-nigh have failed; how, as one after another of his generation found beneath the sand of the desert a quiet resting place, he must have envied them their well-earned sleep! And after all, tragedy of tragedies! after all, Moses did not lead his people into the promised

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land. Only one radiant vision of Canaan was granted to him in its beauty—Canaan all flowing with milk and honey—but never did his weary feet tread its pleasant ways. He is yet another of the “all,” spoken of in our text, who died not having received the promises.

Once more we ask : was God slack concerning His promise ? Once more we answer, “No.” What if the life of Moses seemed to end in failure—the failure was merely in the seeming. Away back of that lay the real, the eternal, the heavenly success. He did his life’s work well, and in that he triumphed gloriously.

Through his long wandering years he amply learned the lesson that he was a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth ; and, as the days passed on, the foundations of the heavenly Canaan began to be reared firm and strong within his soul. He stands to all time as one of the world’s great pathfinders, because he died as he had lived, in faith. But, our lives, yours and mine, are lived in no misty bygone yesterdays. They have to be lived out in the palpitating, perplexing, often painful, to-day. What practical bearing, then, has our text on your life and mine ? This is our second thought.

### II. WHAT THESE WORDS MEAN TO-DAY

What has this text to teach us now, to-day ? Here are we, as I have often said, poor pilgrims of a day, travelling out of the eternity that lies behind on towards the eternity that lies before. The minute that we call *now*, has, even while we speak the word, passed away from us for ever. We, too, like the great ones of old, are the inheritors

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of exceeding great and precious promises : we, as Christians, are, if the Bible words mean anything, in truth possessed of all things. Do we realise these promises ? Do we feel that they are indeed fulfilled in our lives ? We know we do not. To put for the moment things material out of our minds ; who is always obedient to the call of duty, always ready to serve God and his fellowmen, always unselfish, always able to say, " Thy will be done " ? Who is not bound rather to confess with the great Apostle that when he would do good evil is present with him ? What, then, of all these precious promises wherewith the Bible is studded, promises of help, of guidance, of comfort, of strength, of sufficient grace ? Do these promises fail us in our need ? No, a thousand times. When all is dark, when life's sorrows are thick upon us, when our own hearts seem to betray us ; then the chasm that yawns before us is bridged by faith. Not having received the promises, we nevertheless are persuaded of them, and embrace them, and thereby are saved. It is in faith that we too like the great ones of old, must live and die—faith in the Christ after whom they were but dimly groping, but who has become to us through the Gospel, a living blessed reality. Following Him, we live in faith. Following Him in faith and hope we die. " Faith," as one has said, " is like the perspective glass, which the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains put into the hands of the Pilgrims, that with its aid they might discern some of the glory of the place to which they were journeying. There are elements in our salvation, and these among the best, which are retained for the future. Of many of our possessions we can say, ' They are ours now ' ;



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of more of them we must bear witness, ' They will be ours soon.' Increase of grace, the death that is robbed of its sting, the resurrection morning, the acquittal in the Day of Judgment, the full enjoying of God to all eternity : those are the sights we behold through the perspective glass from the top of the hill called Clear. Faith persuades and enables us to seek after a country of our own."

Some time ago I read in one of our papers an account of a religious service held by one of our chaplains right up in the firing line. During the singing of the closing hymn, the roar of the guns became so awful that it was impossible for the men to hear each others voices, though they could see their lips move ; but when the lull came, they found to their surprise that they were all singing together the line: " In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me." To some of us life is strenuous, painful, hard. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and no stranger can intermeddle therewith. There are secret unknown sorrows that like a canker eat our souls away. But amid the harsh loud discords of life; amid the noise, the confusion and the strife we can still look up and realise that in life, in death, our Lord will abide with us. If it be God's plan for us that our fondest hopes shall know no realisation here below, what matter? Of us, too, may it not then in our feeble measure be said, even as of the great ones of old : " These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

" Strangers and pilgrims on the earth." If we could only lay this thought to heart that here we



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have no continuing city our lives would not be so obsessed by the things of time and sense as they often are. The world is too much with us, and we are in danger of forgetting that other world of which this is only the vestibule.

I remember hearing of a man whose whole life had been occupied in scraping and gathering to the neglect of the higher life of the soul ; and when the hand of death was laid suddenly upon him he exclaimed : " What is all my labour and drudgery now ? " Yes, what do all our work and energy and success and ambition avail if we neglect the culture of the soul, the deeper needs of the life that knows no end. " What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? " Let us by all means be diligent in our business whatever it is, but let us at the same time be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

No martyr's crown for me may glow,  
No hero's fame be mine,  
Yet I would walk as He directs,  
Who is my Guide Divine.

If I may hold the hand of Faith,  
I will not ask to see ;  
Though I but glean where others reap,  
Content I still will be ;

Nor murmur that to me God's will  
The higher task denies ;  
Though lowly be the way He points,  
That way my duty lies.

## XVIII

### The Beautiful Garments of the Soul

“Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.”

ISAIAH lii. 1.

IN order rightly to understand the beautiful prophecies which are to be found in the latter part of the book of Isaiah, it is necessary to remember the circumstances in which they were first uttered. The chosen people were then in an evil case. For many long weary years the sacred altar fires of Zion had been black and dead, the Temple lay in ruins, the holy city was a desert, the Israelites were exiled, helpless, enslaved, ground down under the iron heel of Nebuchadnezzar. Haply some of the aged exiles could recall somewhat of the departed glories of Jerusalem, could remember days away back in their childhood when they looked not upon the dreary plains that lay round Babylon, but on the mountains that lovingly lie round Jerusalem. These old men could also, it may well be, remember and relate to their fellow-exiles the story of the long-drawn out misery of the march from Jerusalem to Babylon—seven hundred weary miles traversed with lagging, unwilling feet; and oh! with what anguished, broken hearts. Then when the land of captivity was reached at last, and day after day rolled itself heavily into the eternity of

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the past, still the voice of prophecy was silent. Seemed it not as if God had forgotten to be gracious, as if He had forgotten His covenant, forgotten His people Israel ?

But at last, when the chastisement had done its purifying work ; at last when the people's hearts were for ever weaned away from their idolatrous cravings ; at last the silence of the years was broken ; at last a sweet prophetic voice was heard in that far off land of sorrow, proclaiming to the people God's message of peace.

Not always was the captivity of Israel to go on. Not always were the people to eat with tears the bitter bread of slavery. A high destiny yet awaited them ; a glory greater far than all the glories that were gone. But for that great future the hearts of the people must be prepared. Long years of slavery had made them inert, hopeless, spiritless, languid. They must be roused to a new vigour ; they must rise, hopefully, gladly, to meet their good fortune. Hence the trumpet call of our text: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city."

We have in this verse, first, a call to energy. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion."

### I. A CALL TO ENERGY

All history teaches us the fatal power that slavery possesses to sap away a nation's strength. Men bereft of freedom seem to lose the desire to struggle against fate. The iron seems to enter their souls. They grow torpid and spiritless as the captive days roll on, till in the good providence of God something rouses them, some fresh wrong that goads them to make a stand for their rights,

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some cruelty too grievous to be borne ; or more often the strong vigorous manly example of some hero of their own race, one who seems to carry in his own breast the courage and daring of a generation, moves them. And on the Israelites, on that poor nation of slaves, cannot you imagine the tonic effect that the rousing words of our text would have ? We seem to hear, as we read the words, the sound of fetters falling off arms that had grown suddenly manly ; we seem to see eager eyes glowing with a new-found life ; we seem to hear voices, long saddened and silent, joining in a hymn of praise to a covenant-keeping God. All this the prophet's words meant, we are sure, to the Israelites so long ago. What mean they to-day to you and me ? No slaves are we, but free-born Britons ; what lesson, then, are we to learn from this clear, clarion call : " Awake, awake, put on thy strength " ?

You who have long been striving to live the Christian life, what record, as you quietly review them, have the by-gone years to give ? Have you been always alert, always vigorous, always ready at the call of duty to act the fearless, heroic part ? Has your Christian life and experience resembled the river, which, rising away in the bosom of the lonely hills, goes on ever widening and deepening in its flow, till at last it is merged in the great all-embracing ocean ?

Alas ! you know it has not. You know your soul history has rather resembled a stream, which, issuing clear limpid and pure from its source, leaping joyously over stones and obstacles, full of light and music, flows more slowly and more sluggishly as it advances, and almost " stagnates in flat waste marshes." This is not God's ideal of

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what our spiritual life should be. It should be a continual progress from strength to strength, a continual coming (to change the figure) up out of the wilderness leaning on the Beloved. Therefore, to those of my hearers who are striving to live the Christian life, I pass on to-day this old rousing call of the prophet, this call to renewed strength : "Awake, awake, put on thy strength."

What is the strength here spoken of? What, but the strength of God. Your resources, my Christian friend, are amply adequate to all your need. Not straitened in God are you, but only in yourself. If your prayers are scant, cold, lifeless; if you do not ask for the strength you need, then what can you expect? If you bring only a tiny vessel to the great well of free grace, need you grumble if the supply you draw out is scant and insufficient for your needs? Come to God in prayer: He has great stores of strength, of energy, laid up for you. Without Him, your strength is weakness. In Him you can do all things. We are living to-day in a strenuous time in our national history, a time when energy, resolution, heroism are required from all. Verily we need to put on our strength as from day to day we know not what the hours may bring forth. No time this to slumber in selfish ease, while others are bearing the burden and heat of the day. We, too, must rouse ourselves. We, the non-combatants, must awake, must put on our strength, won by waiting upon God; must prayerfully, energetically do our part in this great struggle wherein lies our country's future fate.

But I must hasten on. There is more in our text than a call to energy, there is also a call to beautify our lives.

# The Beautiful Garments of the Soul

## II. A CALL TO BEAUTIFY OUR LIVES

“Put on,” says the prophet, “thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.”

I would speak to you for the time that remains to me of the beautiful garments of the soul. A gifted modern writer in the course of a delightful series of studies on soul life, calls one of his essays : “On Well-dressed Souls.” What are they, then, these “beautiful garments” of the soul? Of the many I might instance, I choose but three: charity, truth, and hopefulness.

(a) Charity—love. This surely is a beautiful garment of the soul. It is wonderful how the three Apostles, Peter, John and Paul, while they differ in so many things, yet agree in this, that they give in their writings the foremost place to love. Of all the other virtues she is queen, nay, so supreme is her reign that the man who lacks charity seems in truth to lack all things. To love not our friends merely, but all men; to love them, to wish them well, to strive to help them in all things—this is to share the spirit of Him who “loved the world of sinners lost,” who prayed even for His enemies saying, “Father, forgive them!” The soul that is clad in love is a well-dressed soul, it has donned the most beautiful garment that mortal or angel can wear.

May I tell you a story that I heard some days ago? It was told me by a friend of mine, a clergyman in Belfast.

A few weeks ago, at the close of his prayer-meeting, my friend heard the sad news that a fine young fellow, one of his people, had been killed

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in the war. With a sad heart he started off to visit the lad's mother, wondering how he should find words of comfort tender enough to speak. But to his astonishment, when he reached the house, there was that bereaved mother, busy with khaki wool, knitting for the soldiers. Then calmly the mother told the story of her son's death. And here is how it happened : The lad was out from under cover attending to some of his duties, when suddenly the firing began. He hastened at once to a dug-out, where lay a wounded German. This man, in the intolerable thirst that follows from wounds, begged the young Ulster man for a drink of water, and he pitifully, tenderly knelt down and held his flask to the wounded man's lips. Shortly after came the bullet of a sniper, and that bright, beautiful young life was shorn away.

My friend, after hearing the story of the lad's end, said : " Your son has died the best of all deaths. First of all he did the good Samaritan to a wounded enemy, then he gave his life like a hero for his country." The soul of that youth was clad with the beautiful garment of charity, a garment ample enough to cover even a wounded enemy.

(b) The second beautiful garment of the soul that I would mention is Truth. What a rare and lovely thing it is to meet a really honest and straightforward person, one who assumes nothing, who makes no pretence, who simply shows himself boldly for what he is. How we admire such a one, how we confide in him, how certain we feel that never would he betray us ! It is only beside him that we learn how artificial we, most of us, are.

Walter C. Smith, the poet preacher, writing on this subject from the text : " Beware ye of the



# The Beautiful Garments of the Soul

leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," says:—

Whatsoever I be or do ;  
Let me honest be and true ;  
Never wear a false pretence,  
Never speak with double sense,  
Claim a grace I have not got,  
Or look the thing that I am not.

Am I common clay at best ?  
Be the common clay confessed ;  
If for something better fit,  
Let me roundly stand to it ;  
Saint or sinner, why should I  
Ever be a paltry lie ?

Copper cheaply bought and sold,  
Pass it not for burnished gold ;  
Nor let him that doeth well  
Call himself a child of Hell,  
As if falsehoods should be given  
In tribute to the God of Heaven.

Hence with oily phrase and smooth !  
True men know the ring of truth ;  
Think not God can be deceived,  
He is only wroth and grieved ;  
Play not Publican to be  
So much more a Pharisee.

The third most beautiful garment of the soul I would mention is Hopefulness.

Just now, when doubt and sorrow are everywhere around us, it is, I think, impossible to overrate the value of a quietly hopeful spirit. To trust God in the darkness, and to remember that the darkest hour comes before the dawn: this is Christian hopefulness. Just now November,\* darkest and dullest of months, is here, but November will not last always. A few weeks more, and

\* Delivered 17th November, 1915.

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away down in Southern Italy the Spring will begin to show the first faint signs of its coming. Gradually it will creep up and up the continent of Europe, till at last it touches our own northern lands, till at last our eyes will be once more gladdened by the glory of daffodils dancing in the sun.

A little while and Spring will come,  
The earth will her array put on  
Of daisy and of primrose bright,  
And everything that loves the light.

To-day it may be winter in our national life, yet hope on. Winter does not last always. Even as the earth will ere long put on her beautiful garments of green grass, of young and tender leaves, of budding bursting flowers; so, I am persuaded, will God in His own good time lift from us the dark war cloud that now lies so heavily on our land: He will give us "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." As I close, need I say that the soul that is clothed in the garment of Christ's righteousness, is arrayed in beauty, and fitted to meet the King when He comes in His power?

I speak to many who by their presence at the Lord's Table on a past Sabbath have publicly said they are the Lord's; I give you this motto: "Let your garments be always white." See to it that you put on Christ Jesus, then you will be indeed clad in light as with a garment, then will you be fitted to go in to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city."

## XIX

### The Silence of Jesus

“ And he answered him to never a word ; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”—MATTHEW xxvii. 14.

It often happens to a preacher that when he has selected a certain theme from which to speak, the sermon over, he simply cannot get his mind away from the passage from which his text was taken. So arresting is the subject and such abundant food for thought does it afford, he is obliged to dwell upon it, he must perforce speak again from it and from it alone. You will remember that last Sabbath morning I spoke to you from that most solemn of questions, the question put by Pilate to the assembled Jews : “ What shall I do, then, with Jesus which is called Christ ? ” We saw how every individual man and woman was by his or her life and conduct answering this question day by day ; we saw also how the answer given colours the future earthly fate and the eternal destiny of mankind. To-day I ask you to step back a few verses in the narrative, to consider once again the tragic record of Christ’s appearing at the judgment bar of Pilate, but at an earlier stage of the trial. The twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew, from which our text is taken, opens with the words : “ When the morning was come.” And did ever morning dawn upon a scene so awful, so cruel, so tragic ? The

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morning ! beautiful fresh time surely of unstained innocence. By night a Judas may concoct his wicked plans, lead on his ruthless band of Roman soldiers, give the kiss of the double-dyed traitor ; but in the morning—ah, surely then such deeds are in abeyance ; surely then men's hearts and hands will be purer, cleaner, less blood-stained ! Not so. Over all the hours of the day and night we can trace slimy and dark the foul stain of sin. The morning finds these vindictive enemies of the Saviour not one whit more disposed to let justice take her course than the innocent One might go free. The Chief Priests and Scribes have their victim now, and not if they know it shall He go free. Quite recently we pictured Pilate coming as usual to take his place on the judgment seat expecting but commonplace cases, but instead suddenly confronted with the great outstanding crisis of his life. To-day our subject is: "The Silence of Jesus." Here He stood, this mysterious awe-inspiring Prisoner, silent in that place of loud confused talking, silent while false witnesses strove to swear His life away. "Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou how many things they witness against Thee ? And He answered him to never a word ; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."

We shall consider, first, the silence of Jesus, and secondly, some of the directions in which that silence manifested itself.

### I. THE SILENCE OF JESUS

I suppose Carlyle is our greatest modern prophet of silence, yet is even Carlyle himself silent ? Far from it. Never is he so vehement, never so fluent of speech, as when he is denouncing the

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noisy talkers around him. It is not in truth a modern fashion to be silent. A great poet writes in face of a terrible sorrow :

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
Like coarsest clothes against the cold.

To find to-day a person who is silent, especially in face of defamation, is rare indeed. But the silence of Jesus! What a theme is this!

Once in a jeweller's window in London I saw a diamond of unusual size and lustre. The better to display its brilliance, this almost priceless stone was placed against a background of dark rich purple velvet. It seems to me the silence of Jesus is the dark background against which the rare and priceless gems of His speech flash with such dazzling splendour. Four distinct times in the Gospel records do we read of this wondrous silence of the Christ. One was when the Canaanitish woman besought Him to have mercy on her, and for the moment He answered not a word. Another was when the High Priest confronted Him with the many who had been brought together to bear false witness against Him. And He held His peace, and calmly waited while they contradicted each other, and incriminated not Him but themselves. The next instance was that of our text, when Pilate the Roman governor, not wont to be impressed with the bearing of Jewish prisoners, surely marvelled at His tranquil silence. And yet again we read that when He was brought before Herod, Herod "questioned Him in many words, but He answered nothing." Such are the recorded instances of the silence of the Christ; but do these four occasions cover the whole ground before us to-day? Well you

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know they do not ; well you know that there are vast and unilluminated spaces of our lives here, and of our lives hereafter, which are shrouded from our view by the impenetrable veil of the silence of Jesus. What questions rise to our lips that can find no answer ! What vistas of unforeseen happenings rise before us where we must stumble blindly on with no word of His to guide us !

Verily, if He spake as never man spake, we feel also that He was silent as never man was silent. The silence of Jesus ! It impresses us as does a still night, when from out of the dark mysterious regions the stars shine in pomp and glory.

Thus is the divine speech of Christ set in the deep, the infinite horizon of His silence. The speech and the silence of Jesus are wedded together. They belong alike to an order not of this world, the words shining star-like in eternal majesty and eternal truth—the unilluminated spaces of His silence set between—these things taken together make up the Gospel, the good news from heaven, given to your soul and mine.

Let us ask ourselves secondly, In what directions this silence of the Saviour principally manifested itself ?

### II. HOW THE SILENCE OF JESUS MANIFESTED ITSELF

(a) Well, I say, it was very markedly manifested with regard to Himself. As we read the Gospels we are well-nigh staggered by the claims that Christ makes upon our faith and belief. Why, think of it ! He declares Himself to be the Bread and the Water of life, the Rest of the weary and heavy-laden, the One and only Guide and Friend, through life's long journey ; the

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Pardoner of sin, the Saviour of the soul. Yet these wonderful self-revelations are set in a frame of silence. Once more I say, what questions rise to our lips ! Like Nicodemus of old, fain would we ask: "How can these things be?" How can Christ, unseen, save by the eye of faith, be my Leader, Guide, Friend ? How can I by following Him find my pathway illumined by the Light of Life ? All such questions are met only by the silence of the Christ.

Instead of answer He offers us not His speech but Himself. And faith and experience soon find in a rapture of satisfaction that the revelation is all-sufficient, that nothing has been left unsaid, that the silence of Jesus is in truth more eloquent than any speech. But think of the self-restraint the Saviour of men manifested ! Think, for instance, of the case before us. Think of the clamour in that crowded court, the chorus of cruel voices that cried, "Crucify !" Think of the false witnesses and how Jesus could have silenced them, have vindicated Himself, have made His righteousness appear clear as the noonday. But with a wonderful self-restraint He did not elect so to vindicate Himself. He elected to stand serenely silent, to leave His cause to the revolving years, knowing well that the long slow centuries would be powerless to take aught from the majesty of His wordless innocence, knowing that it was by His patience, His silence, His self-restraint that He was to reign supreme in the souls of men and to sway the sceptre of the world. Wondrous was Christ's silence about Himself, wondrous too His silence as a Teacher.

Read the beautiful simple Gospel records, the story of how Christ met and dealt with individuals



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when He dwelt on earth. Did He reveal to each the plan of salvation, even the great essential truths that He came from heaven to unfold? By no means. He met men, so to speak, on their own ground: He understood their limitations; He taught them what He felt they could grasp and understand—no more, no less. He bade one whom He healed go and show himself to the priest, thus fulfilling the law he had known from his youth.

Another He simply told to go home and publish how great things had been done for him. Thus He went up and down the Holy Land, doing deeds of kindness, working "with human hands the creed of creeds," sowing on good ground seeds of eternal truth, knowing that through the centuries of the world's history they would not fail to blossom and to bear fruit. And have not the years again in this vindicated the methods of this divine, this often silent Teacher? Are we not all still humble learners in His school? Can our highest ideals touch so much as the hem of His garment?

Often silent about Himself, often silent as a Teacher, He has deferred the moment of His supreme self-revelation to the hour when in glory you and I hope to see Him as He is.

(b) This brings me to my last thought. Wonderful is the silence of Jesus with respect to the future life. Coming as He did from God, soon to return to the Father, we should have thought, should we not? that His discourses would have been full of pictures of the heaven of beauty from whence He came; that every sentence almost would have been aglow with descriptions of streets of gold, of gates of pearl, of trees fadelessly green, of crystal rivers flowing from the throne of God. For such records we search the

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Gospels in vain. With reference to the unseen world the Christ is wondrously silent.

I think in these war times we are unusually conscious of this silence. We feel that now the veil between time and eternity is wearing thin. As we read the casualty lists in our daily papers, we realise as never before how true it is of some whom we love that there is indeed but a step between them and death. We long, do we not? to lift the veil that hides the unseen world, a little higher. We long to know what our loved and lost are doing in those far off realms of bliss. But here also the Christ of the Gospels is for the most part silent. Few descriptions of the unseen world of our future state does He give us; but He gives us infinitely better, He gives us Himself. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." He tells us that believing in Him we shall never taste of death. And thus we learn to trust this silent Christ through time and through eternity: thus we learn by faith to follow Him, till at last in the land of many mansions He receives us to glory.

But, although little is told us of the unseen world of bliss by Christ; yet has not the Christian who is living close to Christ and imitating His perfect example, gleams of heaven in his soul here on earth? Instead of thinking too much of the heaven that lies beyond, we should, following Christ's method when He was on earth, try to realise something of the joy of heaven here below. Some one has said that "instead of living among the stars, we would better learn to love the flowers that grow at our feet. A heavenly vision which we cannot bring down into our common everyday life means very little for us."

And may it not be that Christ was silent about

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the glories of the other world that His followers here might not be ever looking at that picture, thereby lifting their thoughts from the works of love and mercy lying to their hands here below.

One of the lessons I think that we ought to learn from our subject this morning is that although Christ has not seen fit to lift the veil that separates the seen from the unseen, yet if we faithfully follow His blessed example, and manifest our faith in Him by our works, the future reward will not fail to be ours.

And then, O then, when sorrow's night is o'er,  
Life's daylight come,  
And we are safe within heaven's golden door,  
At home, at home,  
How full of glad rejoicing will we raise,  
Saviour, to Thee our everlasting praise !

## XX

### The Unseen Helper on the Battlefield

“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them : for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. . . . For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

DEUTERONOMY XX. 1-4.

WHEN Moses, fearless patriot and future law-giver of his people, was called of God to his life-work, we read that even his great heart failed. It is with awe and wonder that we hear him say : “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken to thy servant ; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” “I am not eloquent,” said Moses ; yet this book of Deuteronomy is a book of speeches delivered by him, speeches unrivalled for clearness, for force, for utmost tenderness of utterance. As we read the words we feel that through them throbs the great burning heart of the man. We feel that we have here the innermost thoughts of the hero who was not only the leader and the lawgiver, but also the tender father of his people. Aaron we know was chosen instead of Moses to voice the word of God to Israel because to him had been granted the gift of free speech ; yet who can now quote any utterance of Aaron ? while the first five books of the Bible are simply filled with the eloquence of the man who bewailed his slow tongue. Thus often is the first last, and the last first. It is not

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the confident, superficially gifted man or woman who is the most used and honoured in the service of the Lord. While every gift and grace may be consecrated to God and made a means of advancing His great cause, we read that "the Lord hath respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth afar off," and again: "The Lord preserveth the simple." The book of Deuteronomy is, I say again, a book of speeches; but the speeches are made doubly precious to us because of the personality of the man who utters them. When we say these are the words of Moses, do we then say all? No, these are the words of a hero of a hundred fights, the words of a man who had led his people out of Egypt, who had borne with their murmurings, their ingratitude, their reproaches and their sins through forty weary wilderness years, who had so identified himself with their fortunes, that he entreated the Lord in case He blotted them out of His great book of forgiveness, to blot him out also; who had pleaded and reasoned with them, and who, when their prospects seemed at the lowest ebb, had again and again found for them fresh courage and fresh hope. When such a man speaks, his words, weighted as they are with character and experience, are indeed of value.

At the point where our text finds him, Moses has grown an old man and feeble, and his well-earned rest is almost in sight. He has led the people through the great and terrible wilderness. His has been the toil, the tedium, the dreariness, the sowing in tears, another is to reap the harvest of conquest, of glory, of renown.

Call you his lot a hard one? Viewed on the earthly side, his life, I grant you, seems a tragedy

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and a failure ; but, thank God, there is another and a larger side to his career, and seen from the heavenly standpoint, his life was a glorious, an eternal success. He nobly did his God-given work, and that for any man is enough. His reward lay not in time but in eternity. No earthly Canaan was for him, but instead the heavenly country, "the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And up in glory to-day how this man of slow speech is honoured ! for St. John tells us that the hosts of the redeemed sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb."

I have tried to single out one verse from the four I read in your hearing this morning, and have failed. The passage seems to hang together, and to form a perfect whole ; while, taken singly, any one of the four verses seems incomplete. From all the wealth of meaning that the words contain, I wish to-day to emphasise three principal thoughts : First, Moses, inspired by the Lord, foresees that in the future of his race, war will often be necessary. Secondly, he warns his hearers against faintheartedness ; and thirdly, he predicts the triumph of the righteous cause.

### I. MOSES FORESEES THE NECESSITY OF WAR

The Bible is the most martial of books. Again and again in its holy pages do we find the battle set in array ; again and again do the chapters resound with the alarms of war. Now it is the everlasting glory of the Bible that it is ever fresh, ever living, ever up to date. Text books of science, of medicine, of theology even become quickly antiquated and useless. More light and truth is revealed with the years in these different directions ; and new text

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books have to be written, or the old re-edited and enlarged. Not so is it with the Bible, our great text-book of religion. Its rules are final and for all time ; and as the world is organised to-day, war is still, alas ! too often a necessity.

That it should be so every Christian heart must deplore. War is ghastly ; it is gruesome in its details ; it is fiendish in its cruelty. As we advance in civilisation it becomes, with its immense guns, its poison gases, its submarines, its zeppelins, more and more appalling. Death is now busy, not only on land and sea, but also in the air and beneath the waves. No Christian man can, I say, denounce too strongly the cruelty and the horror of war ; yet I say further, there are things worse than war, horrible though it may be. Slavery is worse ; oppression is worse ; trampling on the rights of weaker nations is worse ; robbery and spoliation are worse. To fight for freedom, for the rights of others weaker than ourselves : this is to take up an honourable share of the world's burden. This is to wage an unselfish, a Christian warfare.

To-day, our country is engaged in an awful hand to hand struggle against militarism, against the aggression that would ruthlessly trample upon the weak ; against the spirit that puts might above right. Had Moses, the man of God, been living to-day, can we not imagine how he would have watched the turns of the struggle ; how his slow tongue, God inspired, would have grown eloquent ; how he would have realised in the deepest veins of his patriotic soul that this was one of the occasions when war was a necessity, when to have declined the contest would have been to play the selfish, traitorous, cowardly part ? The Bible,



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I said some time ago, is the most martial book in the world. Think you this martial spirit begins and ends with the Old Testament? Ah, no. In the Old and New Testaments alike, a warfare is going on, a continual unslackening contest with the world, the flesh and the devil. Let those before me who are striving humbly prayerfully to live the Christian life, speak. Is not your life in one aspect a constant struggle? I know there is a deep inner peace that nothing earthly can ruffle; but who is so energetic that to him duty is always easy; who so unselfish that to put others first is his habitual impulse; who so pure, that he is untouched by temptation; who so happy that to act rightly is natural to him? Alas! for our fallen nature. Life is a struggle, a warfare, a strife between our nobler ideals and the lower animal instincts that in us die so hard. In the history of nations as the world exists to-day, war is often a necessity; in the history of the individual it is being waged continuously against those unseen, satanic influences that are for ever arrayed against the Christian. We pass on to our second thought.

In the verses that form our subject Moses warns his people against faintheartedness. "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them."

And again: "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them."

### II. A WARNING AGAINST FAINTHEARTEDNESS

When is it that a man is in danger of being faint-hearted, of showing the white feather, of playing

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the coward's part ? Not in days of easy prosperity, when all is going well, when peace is all around, when he can sit under his own vine and fig-tree, looking at the blossoming flowers, listening to the songs of the birds. No, it is the season of storm and stress that tries a man, and shows of what stuff he is really made. Through such a period of storm and stress our Ulster men, our representatives in the battlefield, have just been passing ; and they have passed triumphantly through the ordeal. As I stand here to-day, I am proud to be an Ulster man, proud to belong to a province that can rear such heroes. When was anything grander achieved even in the records of our grand national history than the onrush of the Ulster division on the first of July ?

Verily, they have written their names, those dead immortalised heroes, on the world's great roll of fame. Theirs was the indomitable spirit that has built up and strengthened our mighty empire. No conscripts were these, forced into the fight, but free, willing, glorious heroes, fighting for their country and for a righteous cause. Brothers in peace, they worked together in the shop, in the factory, in the shipyard, in the counting-house or on the farm ; brothers in arms, together they drilled and made them ready for war : brothers, till the last, they found, too many of them, alas ! a soldier's grave. Out there in France, there is one sacred spot that will always be Ulster, the place where so many of our brothers lie sleeping till the resurrection morning. And shall faint-heartedness, fear, cowardice, be so much as named amongst us their kinsmen ? Do not they, though dead, yet speak to us, speak to us of courage, of strength, of that sacred brotherhood

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which is valiant enough to face fearful odds? Do not they call to us to live up to the glorious tradition they have left behind? Are not we, even in our smaller daily struggles, nerved and strengthened as we remember the splendid example they have left behind? Verily, they have not died in vain while their spirit is still alive in Ulster, the true brave spirit that knows no defeat, no faintheartedness, that fights on bravely to the end. Let us strive to put into our Christian warfare the same spirit that they showed, then assuredly we, too, shall conquer.

I hasten on to consider, in the third place, how in these verses Moses predicts the ultimate triumph of the righteous cause.

### III. THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHTEOUS CAUSE

"The Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"; and again, "The Lord your God is He that goeth with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

In the mind of Moses there is no doubt that with God in their midst Israel must prevail. You know the history of these past months of war. We were persuaded that our cause was just. Yet things seemed to go ill with us. We read of disasters, and we trembled. May God forgive us for our faintheartedness!

In spite of grievous national sins, in spite of our faults and failings, in spite of our want of faith and prayer, we are persuaded that God is with us, and where He is there is strength, power, courage, victory. Already the sun is breaking through the clouds; already the tide is on the

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turn ; already the darkest hour is, we believe, past ; and we are persuaded that our righteous cause will triumph more and more till our haughty enemy and the boasting military spirit for which he stood shall be humbled in the dust. " The Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

Ere I close I would speak to you of a great conflict, the greatest that this world has ever witnessed. Once all the powers of hell were united against Christ the Saviour of men. They seemed for the moment to triumph on Calvary, yet it was through the Cross, through that death of shame, that Christ won for you and me pardon, peace, and life eternal. And His triumph, His victory is the pledge of ours. Even as He, our great Type and Example, fought and conquered, so, too, may we. The glorious old Testament promise : " The Lord your God is He that goeth before you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you ;" in the New Testament reads thus : " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And when He, the Light of life, is with us, then peace, joy, final victory, life eternal are for us assured.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear none ill ;  
For Thou art with me ; and Thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.  
My table Thou hast furnished  
In presence of my foes ;  
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me ;  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling-place shall be.





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